

Article

Physical activity levels of Canadian adults, 2007 to 2009



September 2011

How to obtain more information

For information about this product or the wide range of services and data available from Statistics Canada, visit our website at www.statcan.gc.ca, e-mail us at infostats@statcan.gc.ca, or telephone us, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the following numbers:

Statistics Canada's National Contact Centre

Toll-free telephone (Canada and United States):

Inquiries line	1-800-263-1136
National telecommunications device for the hearing impaired	1-800-363-7629
Fax line	1-877-287-4369

Local or international calls:

Inquiries line	1-613-951-8116
Fax line	1-613-951-0581

Depository Services Program

Inquiries line	1-800-635-7943
Fax line	1-800-565-7757

To access this product

This product, Catalogue no. 82-625-X, is available free in electronic format. To obtain a single issue, visit our website at www.statcan.gc.ca and browse by "Key resource" > "Publications."

Standards of service to the public

Statistics Canada is committed to serving its clients in a prompt, reliable and courteous manner. To this end, Statistics Canada has developed standards of service that its employees observe. To obtain a copy of these service standards, please contact Statistics Canada toll-free at 1-800-263-1136. The service standards are also published on www.statcan.gc.ca under "About us" > "The agency" > "Providing services to Canadians."

HTML version published: September 2011.

PDF version published: September 2011.



Physical activity levels of Canadian adults, 2007 to 2009

About 15% of Canadian adults meet new physical activity guidelines, with a larger proportion of men (17%) meeting the guidelines than women (14%). The majority spend most of their waking hours in sedentary pursuits.

What are the new physical activity guidelines?

World Health Organization and Canadian guidelines recommend the following:

- To achieve health benefits, adults aged 18 and older should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.

Many adults are not meeting the guidelines

Just over 15% of Canadian adults meet new physical activity guidelines. There is some evidence that suggests physical activity should be spread across several days. To explore this, the proportion of adults spreading 150 minutes across the week by accumulating at least 30 minutes on at least 5 days of the week was calculated. This analysis showed that 5% of Canadian adults are accumulating their 150 minutes on a regular basis.

Overall, about one-half (53%) of adults accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) one or more days a week, but this means that almost as many (47%) do so less than one day a week.

Adults spend an average of 9.5 hours a day in sedentary pursuits, or approximately 69% of their waking hours.

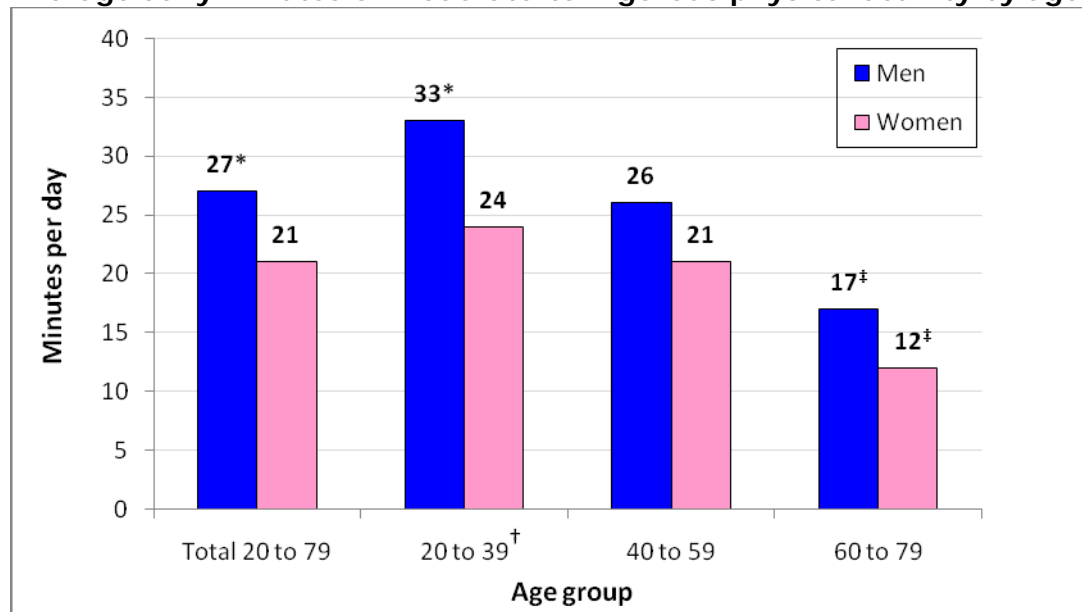
Men more active than women

At ages 20 to 39, men engage in more MVPA than do women (33 minutes a day for men compared to 24 minutes for women). A sex difference is not evident among adults aged 40 to 79 years.



Chart 1

Average daily minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity by age group



† reference category

* significantly different from estimate for women ($p < 0.05$)

‡ significantly different from estimate for reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2007 to 2009

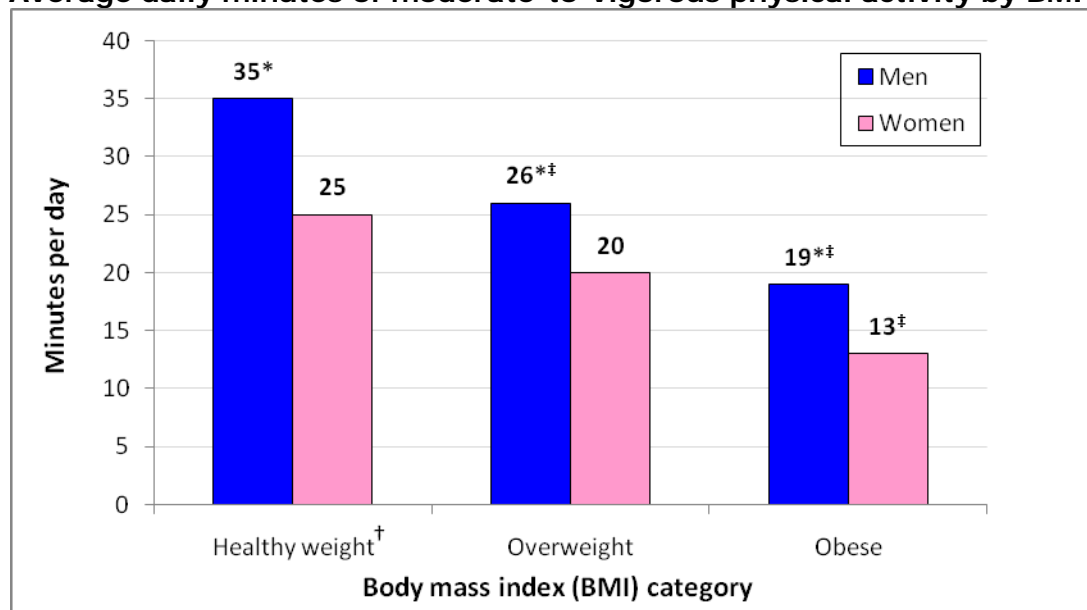
Physical activity is lower in obese individuals

On average, obese men and women accumulate significantly fewer minutes of MVPA a day than their healthy weight counterparts (19 minutes a day for obese men and 13 minutes for obese women).



Chart 2

Average daily minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity by BMI category



† reference category

* significantly different from estimate for women ($p < 0.05$)

‡ significantly different from estimate for reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2007 to 2009

One-third of Canadian adults meet 10,000 daily step-count target

In Canada, men average about 9,500 steps a day, compared with 8,400 for women. These figures are close to the results of the 2005-2006 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), which found that American adults average about 9,700 steps per day.

Roughly one-third (35%) of men and women achieve the well-known pedometer target of 10,000 steps a day. Older adults are less likely to meet this step count target.

This daily average for Canadians is significantly lower at ages 60 to 79 (7,900 steps for men and 7,000 steps for women). Obese men and women accumulate significantly fewer steps per day than do adults with a healthy weight.

Background and further information

The new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines in this fact sheet are presented by the [Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology](http://www.csep.ca/english/view.asp?x=804) at <http://www.csep.ca/english/view.asp?x=804>.

The Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS) used activity monitors to collect objective measures of physical activity and sedentary behaviour for a nationally representative sample of Canadians aged 6 to 79 from 2007 to 2009.



Canadian Health Measures Survey

Some examples of moderate physical activity include brisk walking, cleaning (i.e. vacuuming, washing car), or bike riding for pleasure. Examples of vigorous physical activity include jogging, swimming laps, or competitive team sport participation.

Regular physical activity is associated with a reduced risk of various health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, some types of cancer, osteoporosis, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, depression, stress and anxiety.

More detailed analyses on the physical activity of Canadians are available in the articles, "[Physical activity of Canadian adults: Accelerometer results from the 2007 to 2009 Canadian Health Measures Survey](#)" and "[Physical activity of Canadian children and youth: Accelerometer results from the 2007 to 2009 Canadian Health Measures Survey](#)," in [Health Reports](#), Vol. 22, no. 1. at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2011001-eng.htm>.

Additional physical health measures information from the Canadian Health Measures Survey 2007 to 2009 is available at www.statcan.gc.ca/chms and from the Statistics Canada [health module](#) at <http://www4.statcan.gc.ca/health-sante/index-eng.htm>.

