Article

Health Fact Sheet

Directly measured physical activity of Canadian adults, 2007 to 2011

Health Statistics Division

May 2013
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, www.statcan.gc.ca.

You can also contact us by:

**email** at infostats@statcan.gc.ca.

**telephone**, from Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the following toll-free numbers:

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

**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, 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.”

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

© Minister of Industry, 2013

All rights reserved. Use of this publication is governed by the Statistics Canada Open Licence Agreement (http://www.statcan.gc.ca/reference/copyright-droit-auteur-eng.htm).

Note of appreciation

Canada owes the success of its statistical system to a long-standing partnership between Statistics Canada, the citizens of Canada, its businesses, governments and other institutions. Accurate and timely statistical information could not be produced without their continued co-operation and goodwill.

Standard symbols

The following symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- … not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0\* value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- p preliminary
- r revised
- x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act
- e use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
- * significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)
Directly measured physical activity of Canadian adults, 2007 to 2011

Regular participation in physical activity is recommended in adults for improving health. Physical activity is associated with a lower risk for various chronic conditions, including cardiovascular disease, some types of cancer, osteoporosis, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, depression, stress and anxiety.\(^1\) The risk for many of these conditions is reduced by 20 to 40% in adults with the highest levels of physical activity compared to adults with the lowest levels of physical activity.\(^1\)

**About physical activity**

Moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) is activity which causes a person to sweat and breathe harder or be out of breath (e.g.; brisk walking, bike riding, jogging, cross-country skiing).

Light physical activity includes activities such as light household cleaning, cooking and leisurely walking.

Inactive or sedentary time includes any time spent sitting or lying down (e.g.; watching television, office work, car travel).

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that to achieve health benefits adults 18 and over should get at least 150 minutes of MVPA per week, made up of time periods lasting at least 10 minutes.\(^3\)

On the other hand, recent research has shown that physical inactivity or sedentary time is associated with higher risk for chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and cancer independent of physical activity levels.\(^2\) This means that additional sedentary time can increase the risk for disease even if the physical activity guidelines are met.\(^2\)
Adults are inactive for the majority of the day

Canadian adults aged 18 to 79 spend an average of nearly 10 waking hours per day sedentary (not including sleep). Sedentary time was significantly higher in females compared to males, particularly in the 40 to 59 year age group (Chart 1). Sedentary time also varied with age, ranging from 9 hours and 30 minutes in the youngest age group in males to 9 hours and 54 minutes in the oldest age group in males. In females, sedentary time ranged from 9 hours and 39 minutes in the youngest age group to 10 hours and 6 minutes in the oldest age group (Chart 1).

Time spent in MVPA was higher for males than for females across all age groups. For both males and females, younger adults (18 to 39 years) spent more time in MVPA compared to older adults (40 to 79 years) (Chart 1). Males aged 18 to 39 spent the most amount of time in MVPA (32 minutes per day) and females aged 60 to 79 spent the least amount of time in MVPA (11 minutes per day).

Few Canadian adults met the physical activity guidelines

About 15% of Canadian adults met the current guidelines for weekly MVPA (Chart 2). A larger proportion of males met the guidelines (17%) than females (13%). The proportion of adults who met the guidelines was larger in young adults aged 18 to 39 years (19%) compared to adults aged 40 to 59 years (13%) and 60 to 79 years (11%).
Overweight/obesity and chronic conditions associated with physical activity levels in adults

Overweight and obese adults spent less time in MVPA compared to their normal-weight counterparts. The average time per day spent in MVPA was:

- 16 minutes for obese adults,
- 21 minutes for overweight adults, and
- 27 minutes for normal-weight adults (data not shown).

Adults who self-reported being diagnosed with at least one chronic condition spent less time in MVPA (20 minutes) compared to those who did not report any chronic conditions (27 minutes).

Data source

Data are from the 2007 to 2011 Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS; cycles 1 and 2 combined). The CHMS collected data from a nationally representative sample of Canadians aged 6 to 79 years from collection sites across Canada. Basic demographic and health information was collected during a household interview, followed by a series of direct physical measurements taken at a mobile examination centre (MEC). Respondents at the MEC were provided with an activity monitor to wear for the week following their appointment. The activity monitor was worn on an elasticized belt over the right hip during all waking
hours. Activity monitors measure the amount of movement a person makes in order to determine the time spent in sedentary, light, and MVPA.

Provincial, census metropolitan area (CMA) or health region information on self-reported physical activity can be found in CANSIM table 105-0501 from the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS).

References


For more information on the Canadian Health Measures Survey, please contact Statistics Canada’s Statistical Information Service (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 613-951-8116; infostats@statcan.gc.ca).