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Aging Well: Time Use Patterns of Older Canadians

2005



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Aging Well: Time Use Patterns of Older Canadians

2005

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.	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 ^s	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 <i>Statistics Act</i>
E	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

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Aging Well: Time Use Patterns of Older Canadians

Like other countries in the Western world, Canada's population is aging. It is expected that the number of Canadians over age 65 will reach 22% of the total population by 2026 in comparison to 13% in 2005 and just 8% in 1971 (Statistics Canada Cansim). Over the past few decades, researchers have been concerned with the negative aspects of population aging such as how to care for those who are old, or how to manage pension schemes for increasing numbers of retirees. Yet with the impending retirement of a large cohort of baby boomers, attention has turned to more positive aspects of aging associated with 'aging well.' Even with this more positive approach, seniors have been typically stereotyped in one of two ways. They are seen either as individuals who withdraw after retirement, becoming inactive citizens no longer contributing to society (Hicks 2002) or as people who are busier now than ever, filling their time with volunteering and helping others (Kelley 1993 & 1997). Moving beyond stereotypes is needed if we are to gain real insight into whether older Canadians are 'aging well'. Time use surveys allow the examination of exactly what the older population is doing in various aspects of their lives.

The term 'aging well' now has become part of the language used when thinking about older adults. What it actually means to 'age well' has been the subject of an ongoing debate for the past 50 years. One of the current most accepted views is that 'aging well' is about finding meaning and purpose in the activities in which one engages. Engagement in activities which are personally meaningful and freely chosen has been found to be related to positive physical and psychological outcomes (McPherson 2004).

What are those personally meaningful activities? Some activities are especially important in contributing to a sense of purpose, morale, and identity (Baker, Cahalin, Gerst, & Burr, 2005). For example, both men and women spend significant amounts of time over the course of their lives developing areas of expertise and their careers. For some, work is both fulfilling and important to their sense of who they are (Baker et al. 2005). Older workers, in particular men who are in better health and have a higher level of education, are more likely to stay attached to the work force (Schellenberg, Turcotte, & Ram, 2005). While some may continue in the labour force because of retirement policies, societal expectations or economic necessity (Caro & Bass, 1995; Schellenberg et al. 2005), others may remain engaged because employment is personally fulfilling. Such older Canadians talk about the positive challenges of work, the social contacts, and a sense of being needed and useful (Schellenberg et al. 2005).

Different types of unpaid work also may contribute to a sense of meaning in one's life. Engagement in these activities can act as a coping mechanism for older Canadians who are shifting roles from worker to retiree (Bradley 1999/2000). For many older adults, volunteer work presents an opportunity to continue to use their skills and provides them with a sense of purpose by passing on knowledge to future generations (Ranzijn 2002). Providing care or assistance to a family member or friend provides an opportunity to reciprocate for care or favours received at an earlier time. Caring for one's home is an activity that contributes to a sense of place and personal identity (Rubinstein, 1990). All of these contributions of unpaid work may add to one's sense of identity and are a means of giving back to society as a whole (Ranzijn 2002).

Additionally, individuals may spend time in leisure activities. Through such things as physical exertion, mental stimulation, social interaction, hands-on hobbies, or meditative quiet time, leisure can provide opportunities for meaning-making and thereby ways to maintain a sense of

purpose, self-esteem, and self-identities (Hendricks & Cutler, 2003). Social connections provide an individual with emotional and physical support and a sense of belonging, and are a resource in times of need (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Myers and Diener, 1995; Ryan and Deci, 2000). Individuals may benefit from different sets of activities that promote 'aging well' but the combination of activities likely differs among individuals because not everyone will experience the same positive outcomes from engaging in the same activity.

There is no clear recipe for 'aging well.' In fact, some have argued that to age well, older adults need to gradually and graciously withdraw from life, slowly disengaging from activities (Cumming & Henry 1961). Others would argue that 'aging well' is about continued levels of engagement in a range of activities (Atchely 1989; Kelley 1993 & 1997). Older Canadians are a heterogeneous group and as such there is not one optimal formula for them to age well. The diversity in activity patterns results from the fact that older adults are navigating through a range of major transitions in later life, such as retirement, home downsizing, widowhood, and/or declining health, at varying times throughout their lives with different sets of health, financial, and social resources. Yet even in the face of declining health, individuals can optimize their resources, modify their activity levels and/or adapt their environments to meet their needs (Baltes & Baltes, 1990). This view advances that older Canadians who 'age well' are able to find a 'fit' or balance between their activities and their resources, thus finding meaning or satisfaction with their particular combination of activities relative to their level of resources.

The purpose of this paper is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between aging well (measured here as life satisfaction), level of health resources and activity patterns of older Canadians. Time use data are an ideal vehicle to do this since they provide us with information on how older adults spend their time. First, general activity patterns for men and women across later life are examined. Second, general time use patterns are examined across three points in time to gain insight into whether these patterns vary over time. Third, the activity patterns for men and women in later life who have different health statuses are examined by whether they are satisfied overall with their life. The measure of life satisfaction is used to capture the respondents' sense of fit between their activities and health resources. These analyses allow us to understand whether there are different activity patterns for those who are 'aging well' compared to those who are not and what role good health plays as a resource.

Engagement or disengagement

As older adults move through later life they modify their patterns of time use. They may begin to disengage from some activities, engage more intensely in others, or try new activities. In this section time use patterns of older adults across the later life course are presented to explore three questions. How engaged were Canadians across later life age cohorts? What types of activities did older Canadians engage in and disengage from across the life course? Have these patterns of engagement changed over the past decade? Younger age cohorts are presented in some of the charts as a comparison to the engagement levels of older cohorts.

Hours of paid work decline after age 55

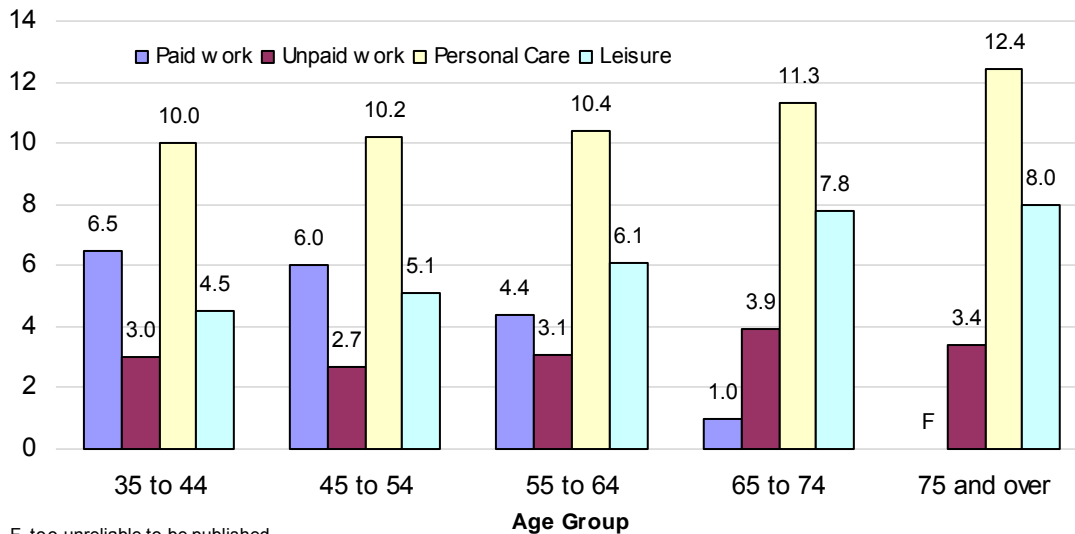
As Canadians move into retirement, the demands on their days change (see charts 1 and 2). The majority of men and women begin to disengage from paid work in their early fifties. Men's hours of paid work decreased after age 55 from an average of 4.4 hours for those aged 55 to 64

to 1.0 hour for those aged 65 to 74.¹ Paid work diminished from a daily average of 2.3 hours for women between 55 and 64 years of age to 0.4 hours for women aged 65 to 74.

Chart 1

What did Canadian men do?

Hours per day



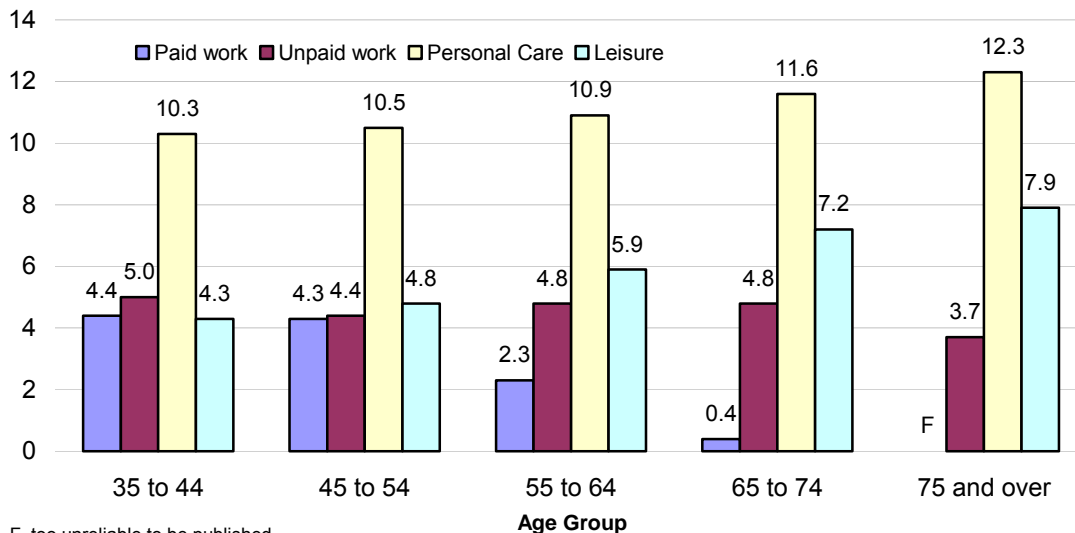
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Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Chart 2

What did Canadian women do?

Hours per day



F too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

1. These averages of time spent are calculated for the entire population and are averaged over a 7 day week.

Family and household responsibilities consumed a large number of hours each day. On average, men aged 55 to 64 years reported 3.1 hours a day doing unpaid work² and women from the same age group reported 4.8 hours. As time spent on paid work declined for men aged 65 to 74 the amount of time spent on unpaid work increased to 3.9 hours per day while the amount of time women spent on these tasks remained the same. For respondents aged 75 years and older the amount of time spent on unpaid work decreased. The findings on paid and unpaid work indicate that disengagement in some tasks is associated with increased engagement in other activities. Older Canadians disengaged from those activities, like paid work from which society has institutionalized their exit but engaged in other activities, like unpaid work, at the same or more intense levels. This result supports earlier work that found that men and women reallocate some of their time previously spent in paid work into other productive activities (Dosman, Fast, Chapman & Keating 2006).

Older age provides time for engagement in other activities like rest and leisure

Everyone's day is made up of exactly 24 hours, which means that each person has a finite amount of time to spend sleeping, eating, earning a living, taking care of others, home responsibilities and leisure activities. Exploring the trades-offs among these activities allows us to better understand patterns of engagement and aging well.

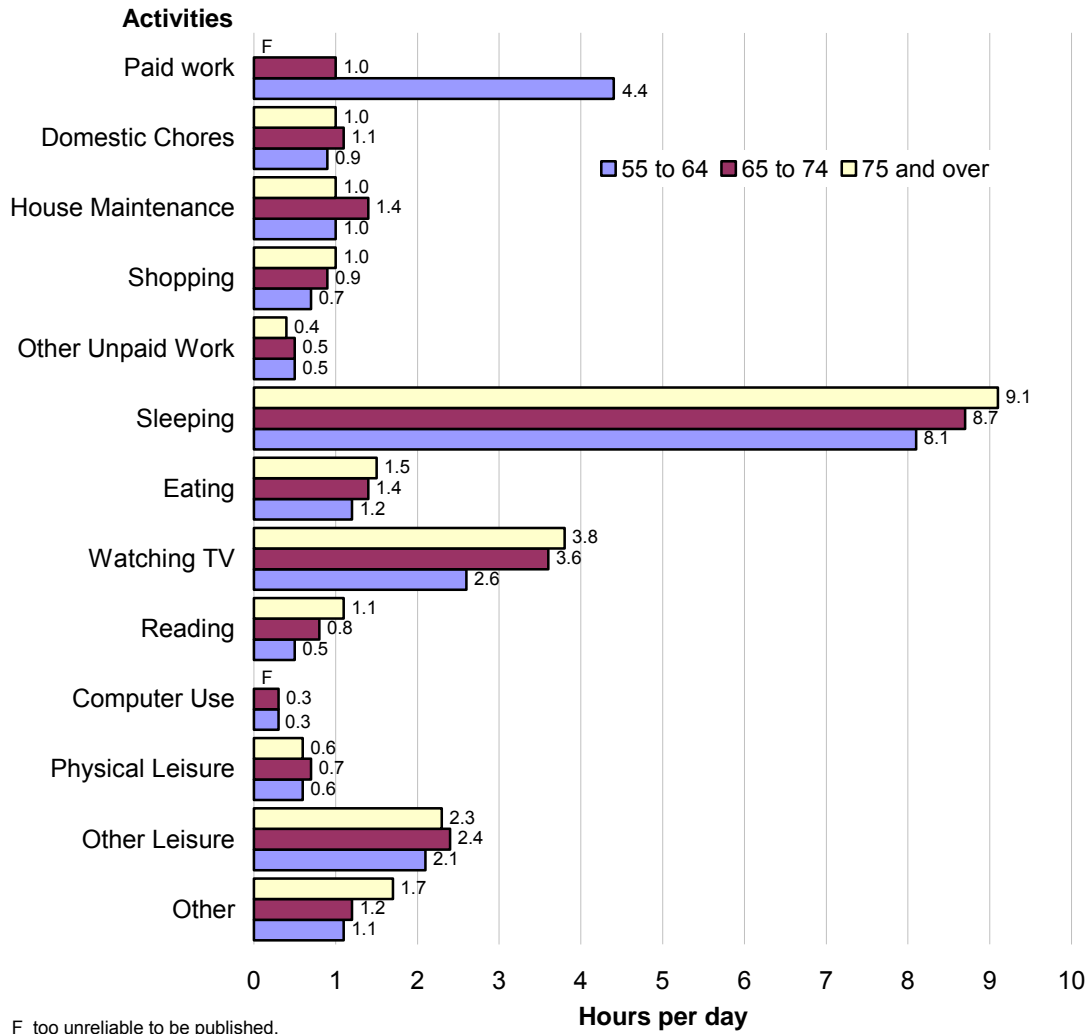
Reduction in paid work allows people to allocate their time to a variety of different activities. Men devoted more time to personal care such as resting and sleep (an increase from 8.1 hours for men aged 55 to 64 years per night to 9.1 hours for those over age 75). They increased time in leisure activities (1.2 more hours a day of TV watching, more than twice as much time spent reading - over an hour per day). They spent extra time on domestic chores, house maintenance, and shopping (see chart 3).

Women's time use patterns changed as well after age 55 (see chart 4). Like men, women spent more time on personal care, especially sleeping or resting (an increase from 8.5 hours per day for the 55 to 64 year olds to 9.3 hours for those over age 75). They also increased the amount of time on leisure pursuits (an increase of 1.2 hours a day in TV watching and 0.5 hours more a day reading).

2. Unpaid work includes household tasks, volunteer work and care and assistance to others.

Chart 3

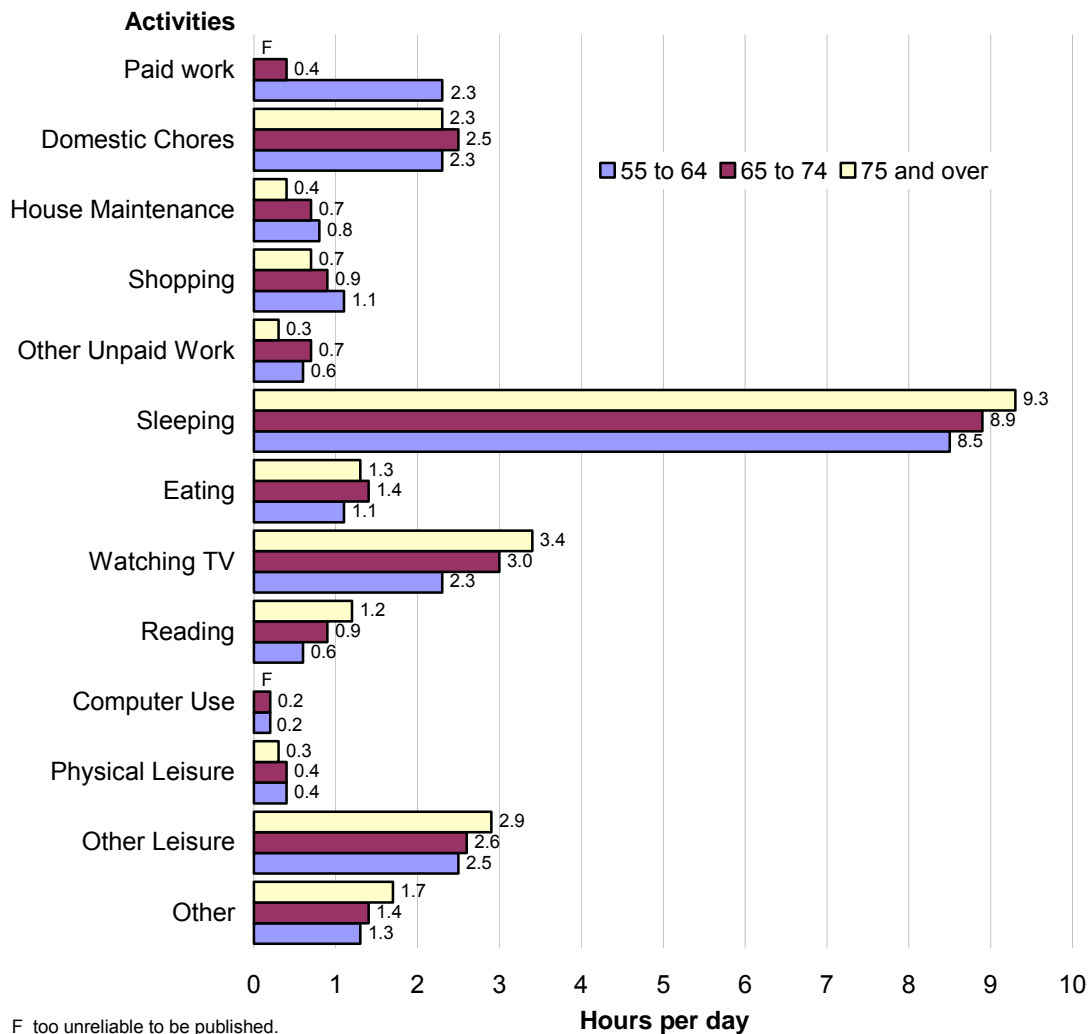
A day in the life of older Canadian men



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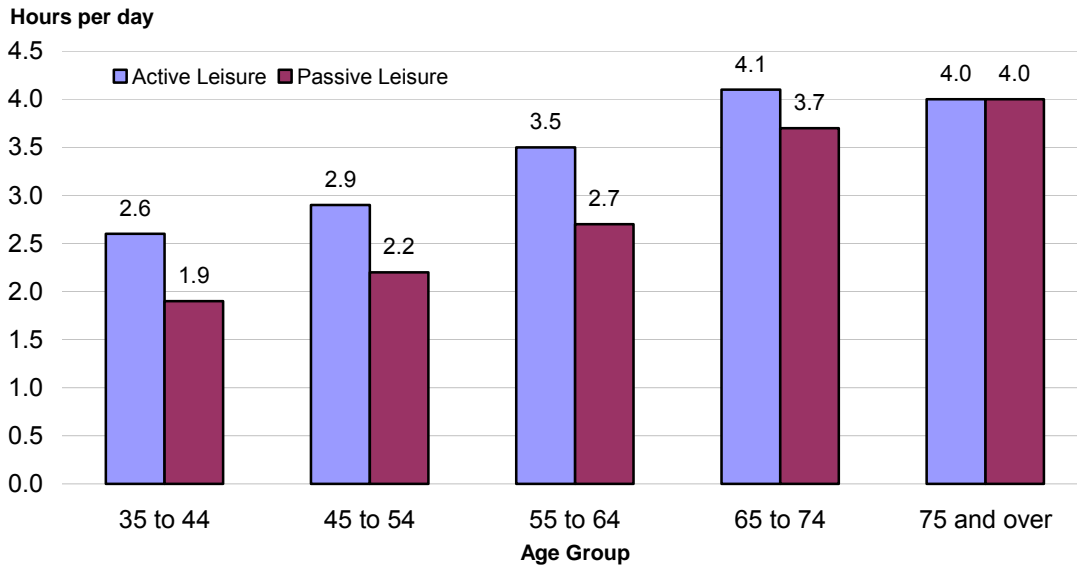
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Chart 4

A day in the life of older Canadian women**Leisure is more than just watching television**

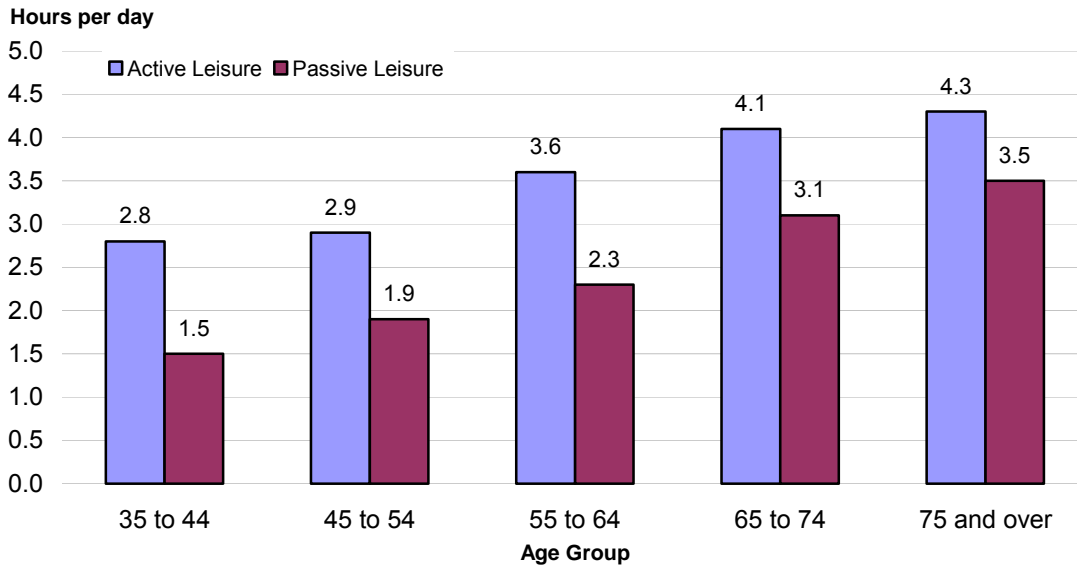
Leisure makes up an important part of older Canadians' lives both in terms of the amount of time they spend and how engagement in these activities can contribute to their well-being. Canadian men aged 65 to 74 spent almost 8.0 hours a day in leisure (see chart 5) and women spent an average of 7.2 hours (see chart 6). This represents an increase of over an hour compared to men and women aged 55 to 64.

Chart 5
Average time spent on leisure by Canadian men



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Chart 6
Average time spent on leisure by Canadian women



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

There are four types of leisure activity: passive leisure, cognitive leisure, social leisure, and physical leisure (Fast, Dosman, Keating & Chapman, in review). Passive leisure consists of such activities as watching television, listening to the radio, and taking pleasure drives. Cognitive leisure is made up of reading books or newspapers, educational activities, attending entertainment events, participating in hobbies, playing cards, and using the computer or the Internet. Social leisure includes socializing with friends and relatives and talking on the phone. Finally, physical leisure includes all physical recreation. Cognitive leisure, social leisure, and physical leisure can be combined to form active leisure in comparison to the passive leisure activities.

Active leisure time increases in later life

Men and women who were post retirement age engaged more in active leisure and passive leisure activities than their younger cohorts (see charts 5 and 6). In fact, men 75 years or older spent over an hour more on passive leisure than their counterparts aged 55 to 64 years. Despite this increase in passive leisure, men still spent more time in active leisure than in passive leisure until after age 75. For women, active leisure predominated even for those over age 75. This oldest group of women reported more hours spent in active leisure than in passive pursuits (4.3 hours a day of active leisure compared to 3.5 hours of passive leisure). Throughout later life women devoted fewer hours to leisure than did men, but the primary difference was in the time spent on passive leisure activities which was about half an hour less per day for women across each of the age groups.

Active leisure changes for men and women through later life

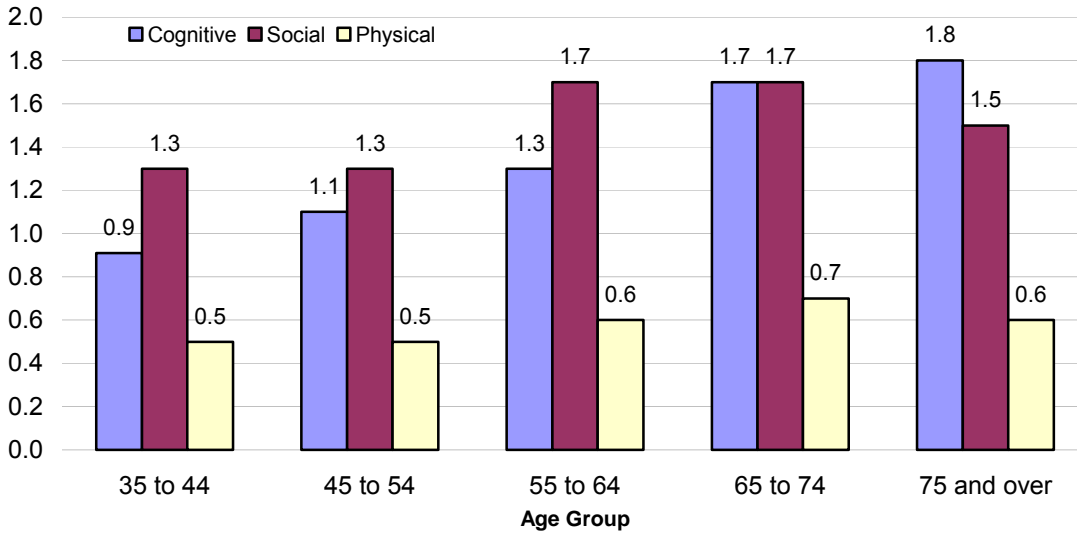
Engagement in active leisure differs for men and women at various stages of the life course. Men over 65 years of age spent 4.1 hours per day on all active leisure, about half an hour more than their younger employed counterparts (see chart 5). Most of this increase can be attributed to more time on cognitive activities in later life as time spent on physical leisure remained stable. Social leisure activities for men aged 65 to 74 years occupied just over 1.7 hours per day, declining slightly for the oldest age group (see chart 7).

A similar increase in the total amount of time spent in later life on active leisure activities was found for women (see chart 6). Women aged 75 years and older spent about 4.3 hours per day on active leisure. This was almost three-quarters of an hour more than women at least 20 years younger. There was a significant difference in time spent on cognitive leisure between the oldest and the youngest age group. Women 75 years and older spent 2.1 hours per day which was about 0.7 hours more a day than women aged 55 to 64 years (see chart 8). Only modest differences were observed in social activities with time spent ranging from 1.8 to 2 hours per day. Time spent on physical activities remained relatively stable. In all age cohorts, women spent more time on social and cognitive leisure than did men. Conversely, men reported more physical leisure in each age group than women.

Chart 7

Active leisure changes of Canadian men

Hours per day

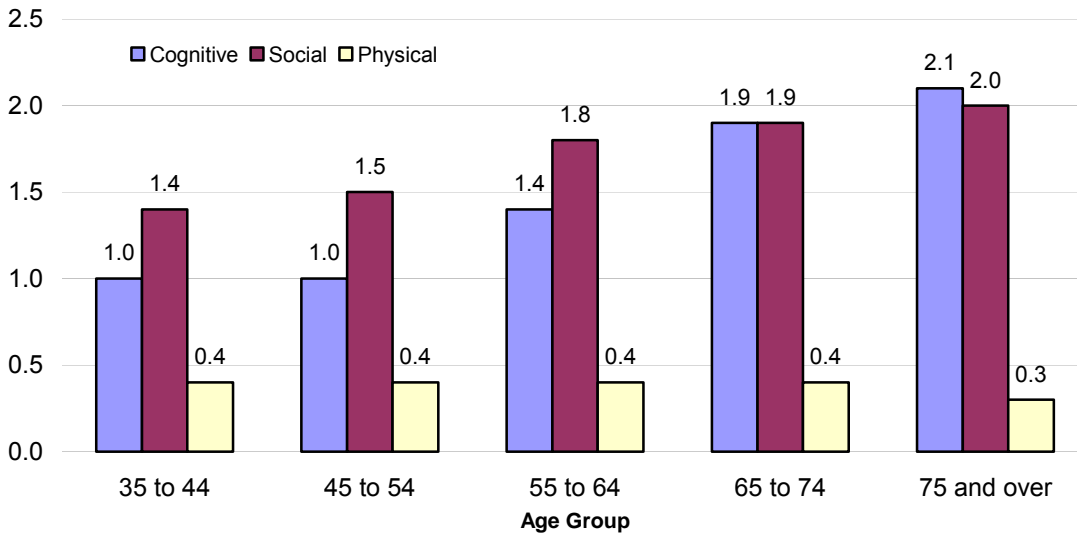


Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Chart 8

Active leisure changes of Canadian women

Hours per day



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

These findings show that older adults spent more time as they aged in established leisure activities, but they may have also pursued new leisure interests.

Labour force participation has fluctuated over the past decade

Labour force involvement of women and men differs at different periods of time and across the life course. Changing economic conditions, societal expectations, and social policies can influence the levels of engagement of older Canadians, especially in paid work which, in turn, has ramifications for engagement in other activities. To examine the extent to which time use patterns have changed over time data from three points of time are studied: 1992, 1998 and 2005.

For men aged 55 to 74, labour force participation dropped in 1998 relative to 1992 but rose to a new high in 2005 (see table 1)³. In the early 1990s the Canadian economy experienced a number of economic contractions; this in turn, had a ripple effect that differentially impacted older Canadian workers (Duchesne 2002 & 2004). During the mid to late 1990s older male workers experienced a number of negative consequences, like downsizing and forced early retirements, as a result of the downturn of the economy. Some of these older workers may have welcomed this forced disengagement from paid work while others may have suffered from it.

The majority of women aged 55 to 64, on the other hand, were less adversely affected by the economic contraction. In fact, the labour force participation rate rose 15 percentage-points for women aged 55 to 64 years during this fourteen year period (see table 1). Men and women over the age of 75 reported minimal rates of labour force participation.

Table 1.
Labour force participation has changed since 1992

	1992	1998	2005
	%		
Men aged			
55 to 64	64	59	68
65 to 74	19	14	23
75 and over	6	5	6
Women aged			
55 to 64	36	41	51
65 to 74	6	7	10
75 and over	1	1	2

Note: percent of respondents who report paid work in the past 12 months.

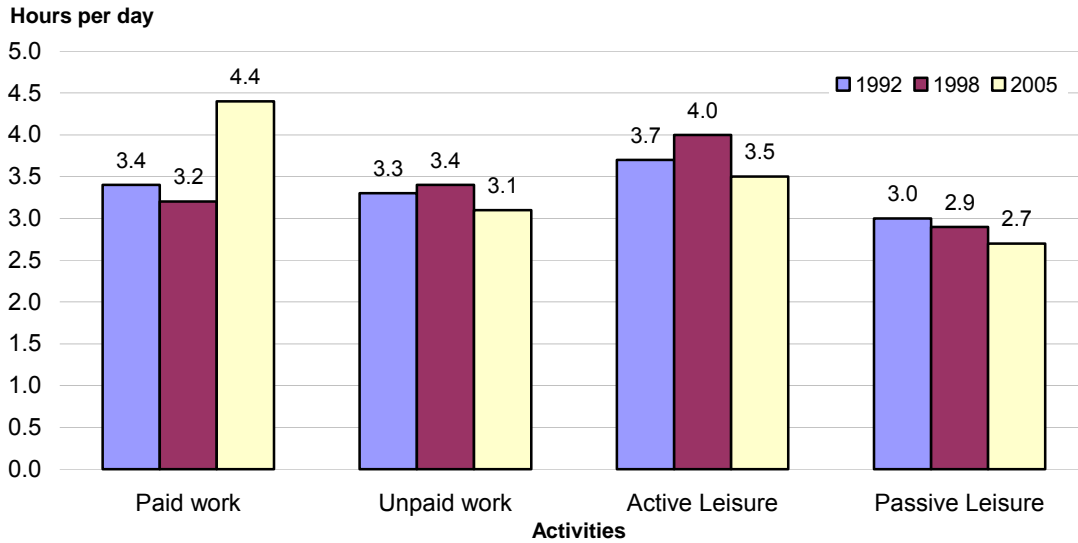
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1992, 1998 and 2005.

The fluctuation in labour force participation over the fourteen year period had an impact on the average time spent on paid work by men and women aged 55 to 74 and their resultant use of time in other activities (see charts 9 to 14). As expected from the labour participation data reported above, engagement in paid work increased by about an hour a day for men aged 55 to 64 between 1998 and 2005 after a drop from 1992 to 1998 (chart 9). The increase in paid work

3. Labour force participation rates derived from the GSS time use are slightly higher than those derived from the Labour Force Survey. This is in part due to different time frames inherent in the survey questions; the GSS data capture any employment in the past 12 months while the Labour Force Survey data capture employment in the past month. The trends in the GSS data mirror those derived from the Labour Force Survey.

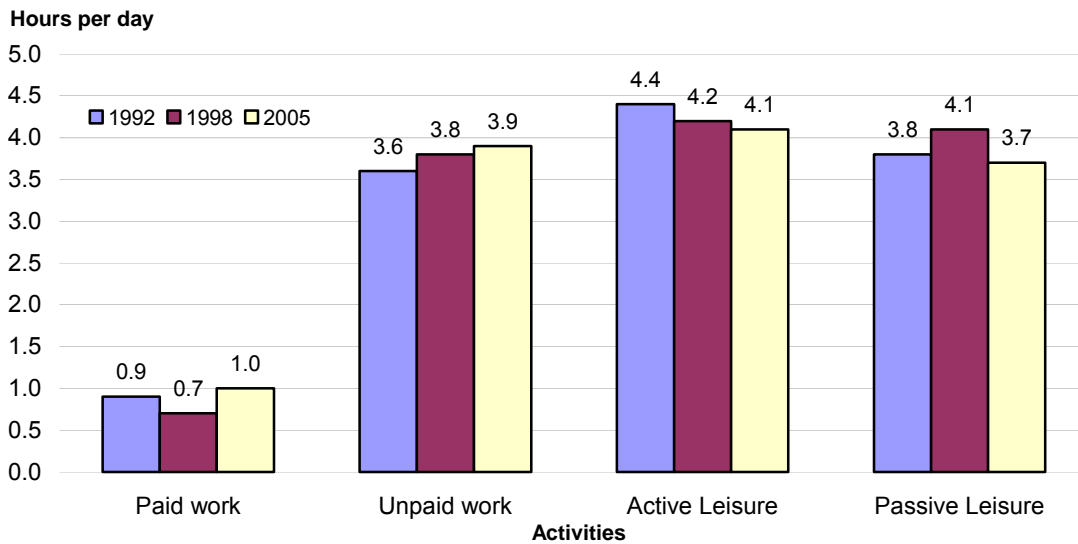
was complemented by a drop in unpaid work and active leisure. Passive leisure remained unchanged.

Chart 9
Time use patterns of Canadian men aged 55 to 64



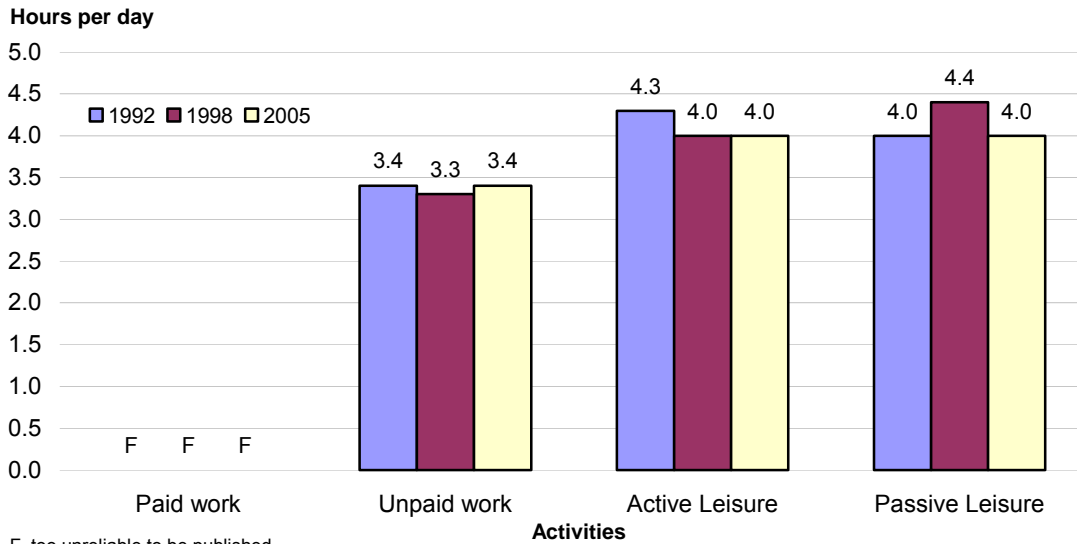
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1992, 1998 and 2005.

Chart 10
Time use patterns of Canadian men aged 65 to 74



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1992, 1998 and 2005.

Chart 11
Time use patterns of Canadian men aged 75 and over

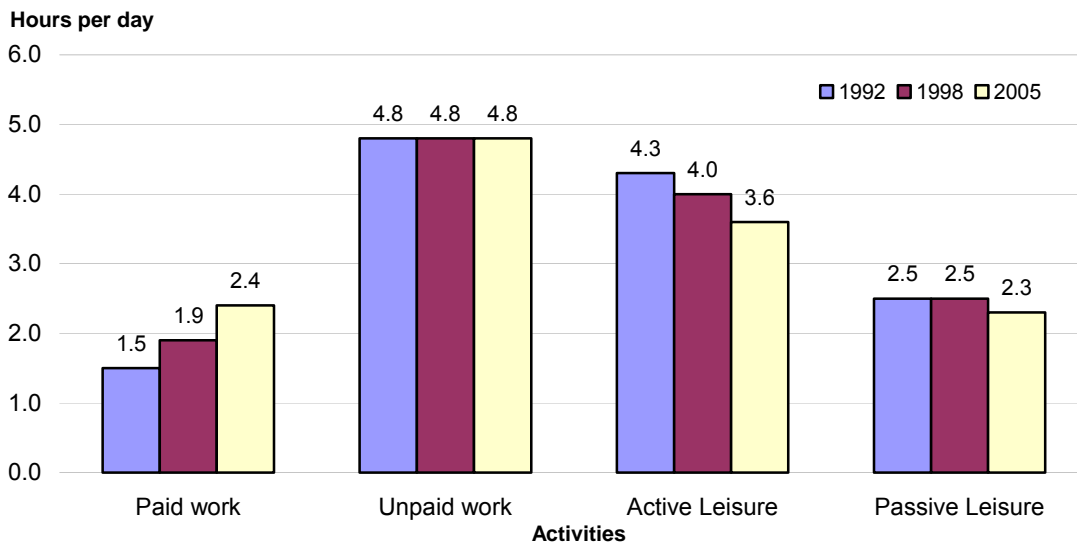


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Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1992, 1998 and 2005.

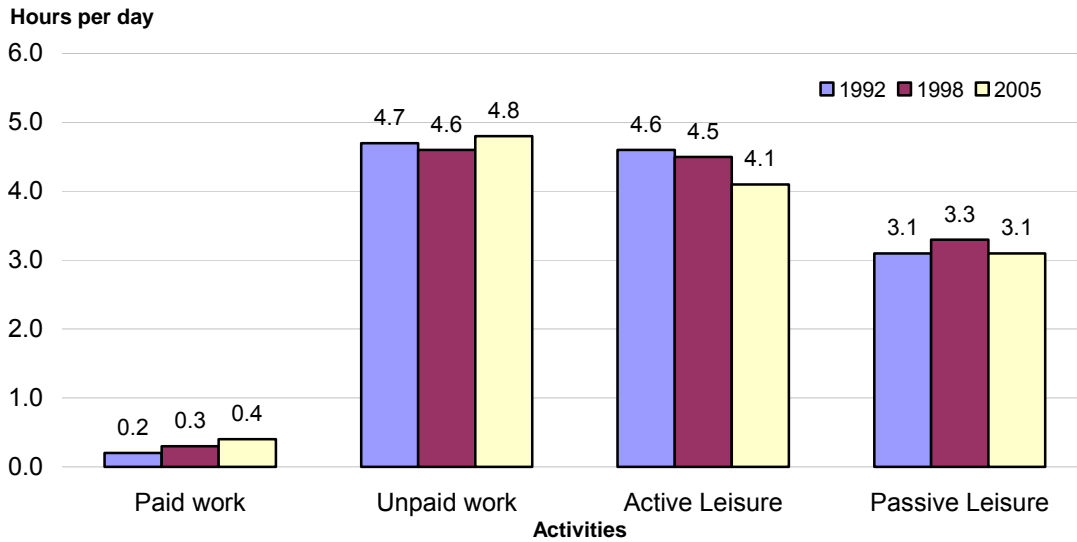
Paid work for women aged 55 to 64 increased on average by 30 minutes a day in each of the time periods (see chart 12). This increase in paid work came with an equal decrease in leisure, almost all in active leisure.

Chart 12
Time use patterns of Canadian women aged 55 to 64



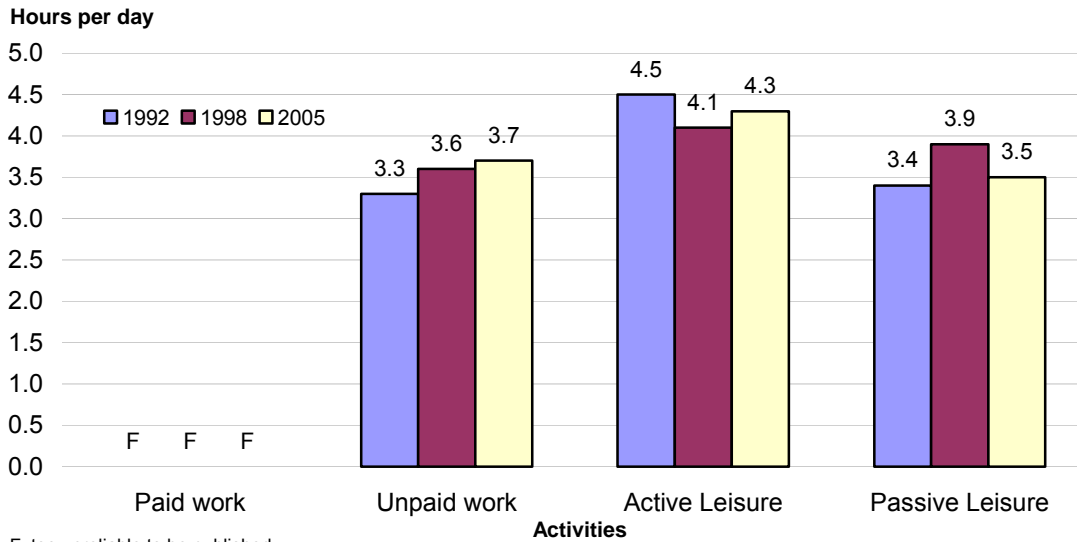
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1992, 1998 and 2005.

Chart 13
Time use patterns of Canadian women aged 65 to 74



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1992, 1998 and 2005.

Chart 14
Time use patterns of Canadian women aged 75 and over



F too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1992, 1998 and 2005.

Time use patterns for Canadian men and women aged 65 to 74 did not change substantially between 1992 and 2005. There was a small increase in the amount of paid work for those aged 65 to 74 and a corresponding small decrease in leisure.

The time use patterns of seniors over the age of 75 indicate that the gender differences in time use virtually disappear for this age group. There are only small differences in the way men and women use their time as they get older.

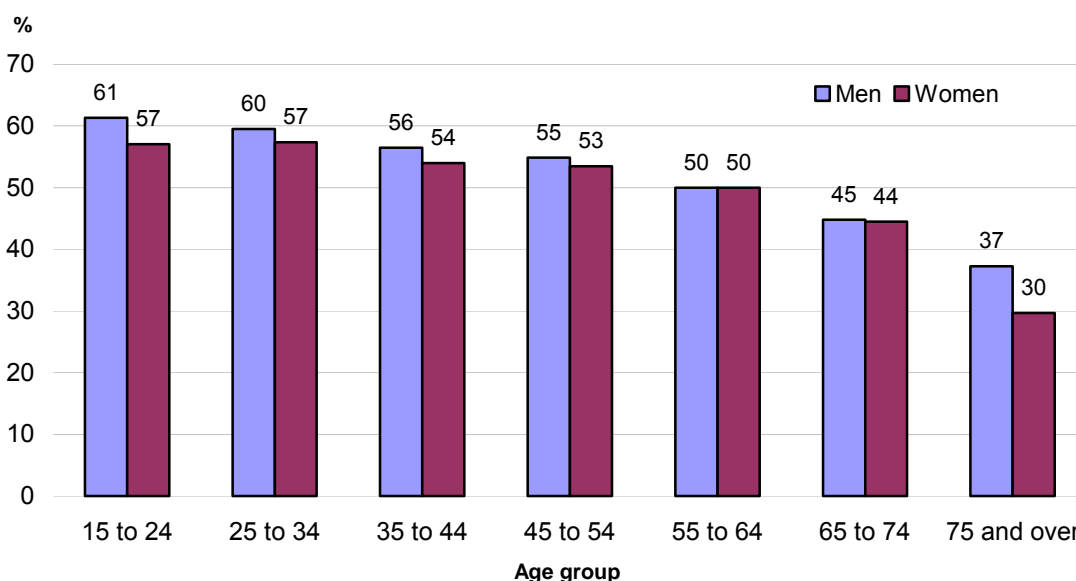
What does aging well mean?

The preceding section provides an illustration of the activities of older adults and how their patterns of engagement differ across age groups and gender, and over time. However, aging well is not just about levels of engagement. Older Canadians who age well are able to find a balance or fit between their current level of activities, and their life situations and resources. Individuals' level of activity, intensity of engagement, and type of activity are directly related to their health status (Atchley, 1989; Baltes & Baltes, 1990). The ideal balance of these relationships likely will differ for women and men, and for younger and older seniors. These age and gender differences may be due to the fact that societal expectations are different for men and women. The result is that women and men will likely make sense of changing resources relative to later-life changes by adjusting their activity patterns in different ways.

How healthy are Canadians?

Health levels change throughout the life course and differ between individuals. Data from across the life course are examined for comparative purposes. These findings illustrate the obvious, that younger Canadians are more likely to rate themselves as having excellent or very good health as compared to older Canadians and that health status declines with age. These patterns do not differ significantly between men and women. About 55-60% of the youngest cohort aged 15 to 24 rate their health as very good or excellent and this proportion declines to 30-35% for those aged 75+ years. Changing health status is one of the many factors older adults are continually adapting to as they age. For the oldest this is a pattern of declining health and increasing frailty. Does their level of life satisfaction decline with age as well?

Percentage of Canadians reporting excellent or very good health

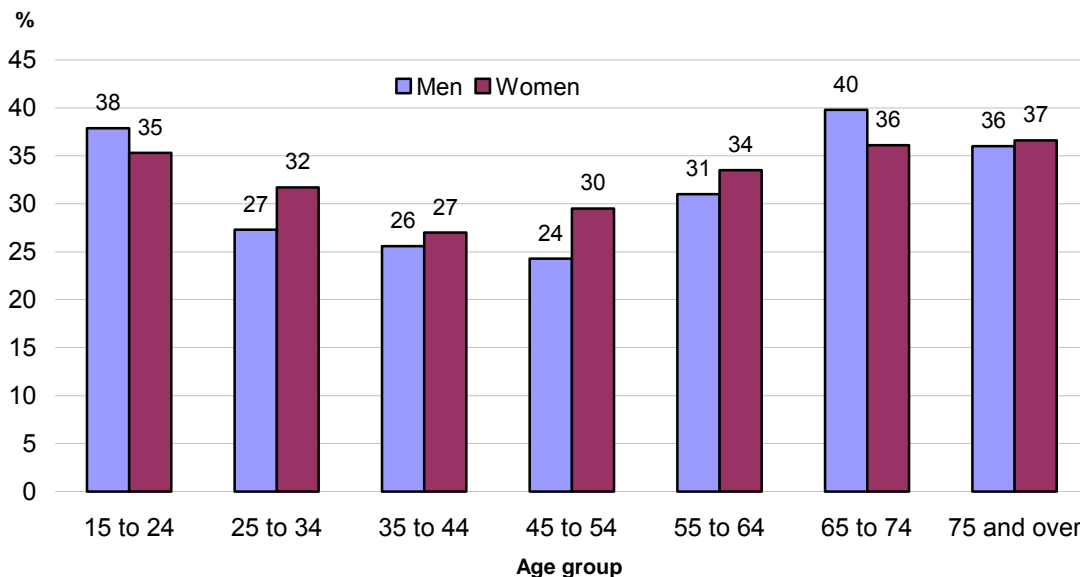


Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

How satisfied are Canadians with their lives?

Canadians were asked to indicate their overall level of satisfaction with their lives; the respondents' answers vary by gender and across the life span. Data from across the life course are examined for comparative purposes. Overall, women have a higher level of satisfaction than men across all age groups. Interestingly both men and women experience their lowest level of life satisfaction during mid-life. This is understandable given this is the age when Canadians spend large amounts of time at work, advancing their careers, while trying to juggle the demands of the household, children, and personal activities. By age 45 to 54, women (30%) were more satisfied with life. However, for men, this is the time of life at which the smallest proportion (24%) indicated they were satisfied with their lives. Older Canadians had a much stronger sense of life satisfaction. As they approached retirement they began to recognize their achievements and see the value of their life's work. As their children left home they also began to experience more free time which they use to pursue their personal interests such as taking up a hobby. Canadian men over the age of 65 reported the highest level of life satisfaction (40%).

Percentage of Canadians reporting high levels of life satisfaction



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

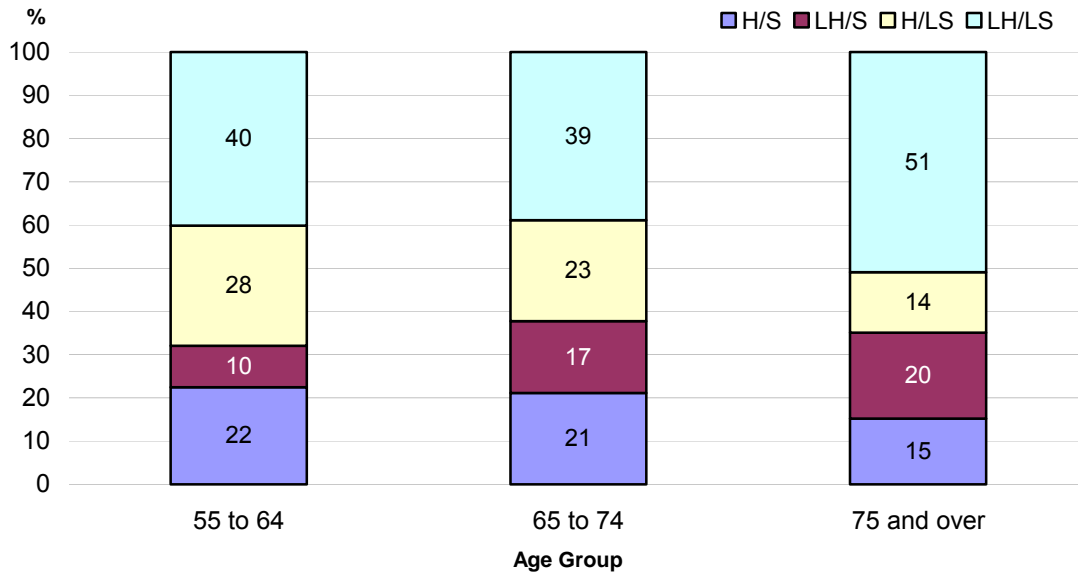
The next section of the paper examines the relationship among activity patterns, health, and overall life satisfaction which proxies as measure of an individual's fit or balance between their activities and their resources. To examine these relationships, a typology using levels of health and life satisfaction was developed (see Methods).

First, the relationship between health and life satisfaction across later stages of life is examined. About 30% of women aged 55 to 64 felt satisfied with their life overall. This proportion increased in the older age groups with a high of 38% for the 65 to 74 year olds (see chart 15). Interestingly one third of these satisfied individuals indicated that they were not in very good health and this proportion increased with age to 57% for the oldest group of women. These proportions remained fairly stable for women over the age of 75 years. Conversely, there were a number of

healthy women who were not satisfied with their lives overall. Approximately 28% of the women aged 55 to 64 were healthy but less satisfied with their life.

Chart 15

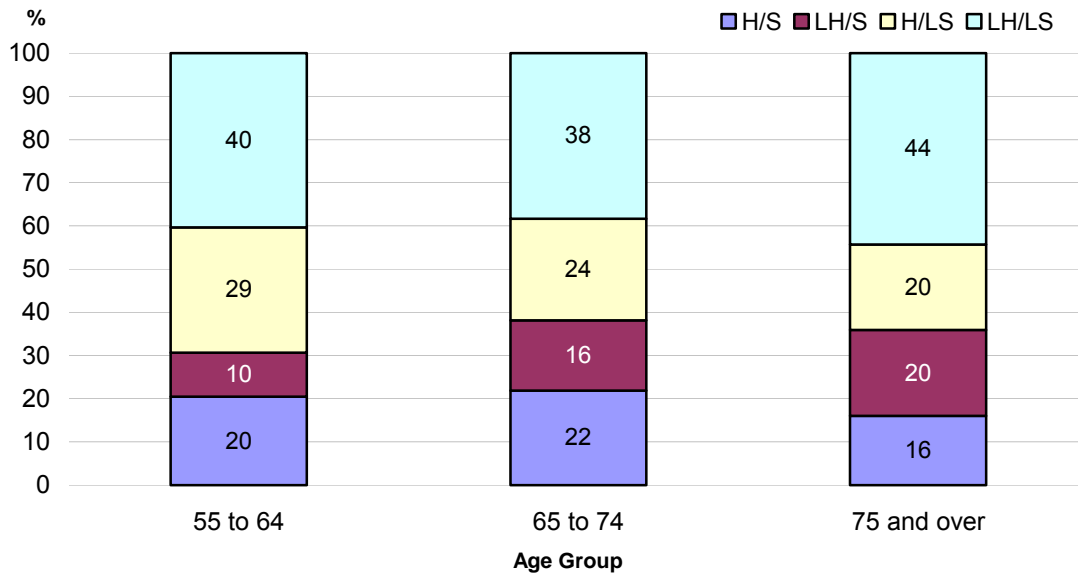
How healthy and satisfied are older Canadian women?



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Chart 16

How healthy and satisfied are older Canadian men?



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

For men the story is slightly different, 30% of the men aged 55 to 64 were very satisfied with their life while a third of these satisfied men were in poorer health (see chart 16). The proportion

of satisfied men was higher for the next age group at 38%. Just less than half of these men stated that they were in poorer health. The proportion of men who were satisfied with their life was similar at 36% for men over age 75 years with just over half of them indicating that they were in poorer health. Similar to the women there was a substantial proportion of the men (16 to 20 % depending on their age), who were less healthy but satisfied with their lives. These results for both women and men illustrate that individuals do not require good health to be satisfied with their life, and that good health does not guarantee a high level of overall life satisfaction.

What roles do health and activity level play in aging well?

A common view is that those who are in good health have the potential to have more choices in their daily activities and thus a greater chance of finding the best fit of activities for their given level of resources. Consequently they would be more likely to feel satisfied with their lives; that is, to age well. However, the above results suggest the relationship between health and life satisfaction is not straightforward. In this next section Canadians' choices about their levels of engagement are investigated by studying the relationships among activity patterns, health, and life satisfaction.

Tables 2-7 show patterns of time spent in the activity categories by different levels of health and life satisfaction in order to better understand the fit between patterns of activities and resources. Since health is an important resource in later life, it is used here. The activities include: paid work, unpaid work, passive leisure, active leisure (social, physical and cognitive activities), and self care. Patterns of engagement are examined for age groups before and after retirement, specifically Canadians aged 55 years and older, to gain a better understanding of the role paid work plays in life satisfaction and aging well in later life.

Table 2.
Time use patterns by health and life satisfaction for men aged 55 to 64

	Healthy/ satisfied	Less healthy/ satisfied	Healthy/ less satisfied	Less healthy/ less satisfied
	Hours per day			
Paid work	4.3	4.0	4.5	4.5
Unpaid work	3.0	3.2	3.3	2.9
Self care	10.5	10.5	10.1	10.6
Passive leisure	2.4	3.1	2.3	2.9
Cognitive leisure	1.5	F	1.4	1.1
Social leisure	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6
Physical leisure	0.8	F	0.7	0.4

F too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Table 3.
Time use patterns by health and life satisfaction for women aged 55 to 64

	Healthy/ satisfied	Less healthy/ satisfied	Healthy/ less satisfied	Less healthy/ less satisfied
	Hours per day			
Paid work	2.5	F	2.7	2.2
Unpaid work	4.7	4.6	5.0	4.8
Self care	10.8	11.2	10.6	11.2
Passive leisure	2.0	2.7	2.0	2.7
Cognitive leisure	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.2
Social leisure	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.7
Physical leisure	0.6	F	0.5	0.2

F too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Table 4.
Time use patterns by health and life satisfaction for men aged 65 to 74

	Healthy/ satisfied	Less healthy/ satisfied	Healthy/ less satisfied	Less healthy/ less satisfied
	Hours per day			
Paid work	F	F	F	F
Unpaid work	4.4	3.9	4.1	3.5
Self care	11.1	11.0	11.0	11.8
Passive leisure	3.1	4.5	3.4	4.0
Cognitive leisure	2.0	1.8	1.5	1.6
Social leisure	1.7	1.7	2.0	1.4
Physical leisure	0.9	F	0.9	0.6

F too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Table 5.
Time use patterns by health and life satisfaction for women aged 65 to 74

	Healthy/ satisfied	Less healthy/ satisfied	Healthy/ less satisfied	Less healthy/ less satisfied
	Hours per day			
Paid work	F	F	F	F
Unpaid work	5.3	4.6	5.0	4.5
Self care	11.2	11.9	11.2	12.1
Passive leisure	2.8	3.0	2.8	3.4
Cognitive leisure	2.2	1.6	2.0	1.8
Social leisure	1.7	2.3	1.7	1.8
Physical leisure	0.4	F	0.6	0.3

F too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Table 6.
Time use patterns by health and life satisfaction men aged 75 and over

	Healthy/ satisfied	Less healthy/ satisfied	Healthy/ less satisfied	Less healthy/ less satisfied
	Hours per day			
Paid work	F	F	F	F
Unpaid work	3.4	3.2	3.8	3.3
Self care	12.0	12.9	11.9	12.5
Passive leisure	3.3	4.0	4.0	4.2
Cognitive leisure	1.9	1.5	1.9	1.9
Social leisure	F	1.4	F	1.3
Physical leisure	F	F	F	F

F too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Table 7.
Time use patterns by health and life satisfaction for women aged 75 and over

	Healthy/ satisfied	Less healthy/ satisfied	Healthy/ less satisfied	Less healthy/ less satisfied
	Hours per day			
Paid work	F	F	F	F
Unpaid work	3.7	3.9	3.9	3.6
Self care	12.1	12.3	12.1	12.5
Passive leisure	3.2	3.5	3.5	3.6
Cognitive leisure	2.9	2.1	2.2	1.9
Social leisure	1.7	2.0	1.8	2.1
Physical leisure	F	F	0.3	0.2

F too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005.

Healthy older Canadians spend more time in paid work

When time use patterns in paid work are examined by health and life satisfaction the general patterns identified above still hold. Women younger than 65 years spent less time in paid work than their male counterparts. Of note, healthy men and women who were satisfied overall with their life spent slightly less time in paid work and had more balance in work activities and their other activities than those less satisfied. For both men and women healthy individuals spent more time in paid work. Few men and women worked after the age of 65.

More unpaid work is done by healthy older Canadians

Overall, time spent on unpaid work by women and men aged 65 to 74 years was greater than the time spent by either their younger or older counterparts. However, within each age group the amount of time spent in unpaid work did not vary substantially by levels of life satisfaction.

Healthy individuals spent significantly more time in unpaid work than the less healthy in most age groups.

Leisure activities

Less healthy older Canadians spend more time on passive leisure

Older Canadians spent more time on passive leisure after the age 65. Healthy pre-retirement women (younger than 65 years), and pre and post retirement men spent less time in passive leisure than their less healthy counterparts. However, for women over age 65, only the less healthy and less satisfied spent more time in passive leisure compared to healthy women in the same age group. For those 75 years and older there were no differences in amount of time spent in passive leisure regardless of level of health or life satisfaction.

Active leisure may be correlated with aging well

Active leisure increased for all respondents over the age of 65 years and remained at the same level for the majority of the respondents in the oldest age group. The exception to this pattern is that the oldest healthy satisfied women spent even more time in active leisure than their younger counterparts.

For the most part, healthy satisfied older adults spent the most time on active leisure compared to the less healthy, less satisfied who spent the least amount of time. Differences ranged from $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 hour more a day. This pattern was consistent across the later life course, and for both men and women. Active leisure is comprised of cognitive, social and physical activities. Each of these activities contributes to aging well in different ways. The combination of these activities is likely to vary for men and women of different ages with various health resources.

Cognitive leisure

Women 55 years and older spent more time on cognitive leisure as they aged regardless of their level of health or life satisfaction. In contrast older groups of men spent more time in cognitive leisure than the younger age groups. However, for men in the oldest age group, the amount of time spent on cognitive leisure activities was slightly lower for satisfied men.

Healthy satisfied women spent the most time on cognitive leisure activities across the older life course. For the two younger age groups of men a similar pattern is found. However there were no real differences in the time spent on cognitive activities among men 75 years and older, by health and satisfaction.

Social leisure

Even though researchers have suggested that having strong social connections have been found to play a significant role in aging well (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Myers & Diener, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2000), no clear patterns were found across the life span or across levels of health status and satisfaction for either men or women. These results suggest that time spent in social activities may not be an adequate measure of the strength of social connections. In fact, important social connections can occur in a variety of settings while performing different types of activities. For example, relationships often develop at work, through volunteer commitments or through team sports.

Physical leisure

In general, healthy men and women spent more time on physical activities. The youngest and oldest age groups of healthy women who were more satisfied overall with their lives were more physically active. In contrast, for the 65 to 74 year olds it was healthy women who were less satisfied with their lives who spent the most time in physical activities. For healthy men under the age of 75 years the level of activity did not differ by level of satisfaction. This suggests that health and physical activity are key correlates but there is no clear relationship between physical activity and level of satisfaction.

Conclusion

The analysis of time use data gives us a better understanding of the relationship between aging well (measured here as life satisfaction), level of health resources and activity patterns of older Canadians.

Some individuals remain engaged in the labour force late in life while others retire early. When the patterns of time use are compared across age groups it is clear that as individuals retired from employment they reallocated time once spent in paid work to other activities of unpaid work, leisure and self care. Also apparent from these findings is that older Canadians remained engaged in a wide variety of activities well into later life. However, these patterns are not consistent over time. Over the past fourteen years, time use patterns of older Canadians have shifted. In 2005, more Canadians 55 to 74 years old were engaged in the labour force, were working later in life and spending less time in leisure activities compared to 1998 and 1992.

Further exploration of the time use patterns by health and life satisfaction confirmed that there is no optimal set of activities for everyone. In fact, health status has a significant influence on time spent in a range of activities. Healthy individuals spent more on paid work, unpaid work and active leisure. Generally, the fit or balance of activities for healthy, satisfied women included less time on paid work for working age women than their healthy, less satisfied counterparts and more time on active leisure like cognitive and physical activities. For healthy, satisfied men there was no consistent set of activities across the age groups. Less healthy and less satisfied men and women for all age groups consistently spent the most time on passive leisure.

Note:

This study is based on the time use information collected in 2005 in Cycle 19 of the General Social Survey (GSS).

Time use estimates in this report are based on the information reported in the one-day time use diary portion of the survey. The diary provides a comprehensive accounting of participation in, and time spent on, a wide variety of day-to-day activities. In addition, information was collected on the location where these activities occurred (e.g., at home, at work, etc.) and the social contacts (for non-personal care activities), i.e., who the respondent was with - spouse, children, family, friends. The questionnaire collected additional information on perception of time, time spent on child care and other unpaid work, paid work and education, cultural and sport activities, social networks and trust, transportation as well as many socio-economic characteristics.

The target population included all people aged 15 and over, except full-time residents of institutions and residents of the Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Data was collected each month from January 2005 to December 2005 using a computer-assisted telephone interview system. Over this period, a total of 19,600 people were successfully interviewed, yielding a response rate of 59%.

This survey was previously conducted in 1998, 1992 and 1986.

Methods

Things you should know about the variables

Life satisfaction is measured by a question that asked “Using the same scale, how do you feel about your life as a whole right now?” The scale ranges from 1 – very dissatisfied to 10—very satisfied. Those who answered 9 or 10 were coded as overall very satisfied with their life.

To measure the respondent’s health the question used was “In general, would you say your health is:” with 1 indicating excellent health and 5 indicating poor health. The interviewer is instructed to insure that the measure of health is capturing long term health problems, i.e., a condition lasting or expected to last more than 6 months.

Typology construction

The level and type of activity is considered to be a key factor in whether individuals ‘age well’. One way to measure whether an individual is ‘aging well’ is to use the question “Are you satisfied overall with your life”. This question captures the individual’s perception of their ability to find a fit between their activities and their changing resource levels. Health is recognized as one of the key resources to age well. In reality health is a resource that changes over time and is one that individuals must continually adapt to. Health has also been found to be a strong predictor of the type and level of activity people engage in. Because of this complex relationship between activity levels and ‘aging well’ a typology has been used which incorporates a measure of overall life satisfaction and health status.

The typology included four categories: healthy and satisfied (H/S), less healthy and satisfied (LH/S), healthy and less satisfied (H/LS) and less healthy and less satisfied (LH/LS). To be considered healthy the respondent must have rated their health as very good or excellent. To be considered satisfied with life overall a score of 9 or 10 from a 10 point scale was used. Activity patterns of older Canadians are examined by cohorts to determine whether patterns change over the life course and whether they vary by levels of satisfaction or health status or both. The terms satisfied and very satisfied are used interchangeably in the text, and both refer to the classification “very satisfied” as defined above.

Analysis

Average time spent on each activity was calculated using an ANOVA and standard post-hoc tests were applied.

Glossary of terms

Activity Category	Activities Included
Paid work	All time spent at a paid job; associated travel
Unpaid work	
Domestic work	Meal preparation; baking; preserving food; associated cleanup; indoor and outdoor cleaning; laundry, ironing, folding and mending; shopping; household management; gardening; plant and pet care; other odd jobs; associated travel
Care work	Childcare (personal care, medical care, teaching, assisting, reading and conversation with, playing with, travel for children and unpaid babysitting); adult care (personal care, medical care and associated travel for adults within the household; housework, cooking, house maintenance/repair, transportation, correspondence and care for disabled or ill adults living outside the household)
Volunteer work	Participation in professional or union organizations; political or civic activities; involvement in child, youth or family organizations; involvement in religious organizations, fraternal or social organizations; support groups; coaching; associated travel
Leisure	
Passive leisure	Watching television or videos; listening to the radio or stereo
Cognitive leisure	Reading books, newspapers or magazines; general computer use; writing letters; hobbies; cards & board games; attending educational programs
Physical leisure	Exercise; walking; sports; associated travel
Social leisure	Socializing in person or on the telephone; associated travel
Self care	Eating, sleeping, washing, dressing, personal and medical care, prayer, meditation, thinking, travel for personal or religious activities

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