

Health Reports: Exercise and screen time during the COVID-19 pandemic

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Wednesday, July 15, 2020

Canadian adults who were exercising outdoors and limiting screen time during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic were more likely to report good mental and general health. This was particularly evident among women. A new study released today by Statistics Canada describes the exercise habits and changes in behaviours relating to screen time of Canadian adults in late March and early April 2020, and examines relationships between these behaviours and self-perceived health.

Physical distancing measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 were implemented in Canada in March 2020 and included widespread border, business and school closures. This led to a dramatic shift in daily routines as many Canadians suddenly found themselves working from home, homeschooling their children and avoiding unnecessary trips outside their homes. While physical distancing measures are necessary to reduce virus transmission, prolonged restrictions can lead to decreased outdoor exercise and poorer self-perceived mental health.

About two-thirds of men and women reported they were exercising outdoors and more women reported indoor exercise compared with men (63% versus 55%). More than two-thirds of participants reported that they had increased their TV time and Internet usage and less than one-quarter reported increased video game usage.

Women who were exercising outdoors were more likely to self-perceive their mental health as very good or excellent compared with those who were not exercising outdoors. Women who were exercising outdoors or indoors were more likely to self-perceive their general health as very good or excellent compared with those who were not exercising. Men and women who did not change or who decreased their TV time were more likely to self-perceive their mental and general health as very good or excellent, compared with those who had increased their TV time. The same was evident for Internet use in women only. Men and women who did not change or who decreased their video game time were more likely to self-perceive their mental health as very good or excellent, compared with those who increased their video game time.

Maintaining opportunities for outdoor exercise and limiting screen time may promote better mental and general health during periods of confinement.

Note to readers

This study is based on data collected from March 29 to April 3, 2020, from the Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1 (CPSS1). The survey was designed to collect information related to COVID-19 concerning the labour market, behaviours, and health impacts for the Canadian population 15 years of age and older living in the provinces. Of the 7,242 individuals who were invited to complete the survey, 4,627 people responded, yielding a 63.9% response rate representing 31 million Canadians. The current analysis was based on 4,524 adult participants aged 20 years and older.



Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5311.

The article "[Exercise and screen time during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)" is now available in the July 15, 2020 online issue of *Health Reports*, Vol. 31, no. 6 ([82-003-X](#)).

This issue of *Health Reports* also contains the article "[Association between mothers' postoperative opioid prescriptions and opioid-related events in their children: A population-based cohort study](#)."

To enquire about "Exercise and screen during the COVID-19 pandemic," contact Rachel Colley (rachel.colley@canada.ca), Health Analysis Division.

To enquire about "Association between mothers' postoperative opioid prescriptions and opioid-related events in their children: A population-based cohort," contact Jennifer Bethell (jennifer.bethell@uhn.ca), University of Toronto.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).