

# Canadian Health Measures Survey: Activity monitor data, 2018-2019

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## Half of Canadian adults meet the new physical activity recommendation

Results from the 2018 and 2019 Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS) show that about one in two Canadian adults aged 18 to 79 meet the most recent recommended target of accumulating at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity (MVPA). The results also show variations by age group, with younger Canadians more likely to meet the recommendation than older Canadians.

Through the years, physical activity recommendations have evolved with our increasing understanding of the relationship between physical activity and health. The new *Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults aged 18-64 years and for Adults aged 65 years and older*, were released in October 2020 by the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. They were developed in response to increased interest in understanding how various movement-related behaviours (e.g. physical activity, sleep and sedentary behaviour) interact to influence the overall health of adults. According to these guidelines, the new physical activity recommendation targets an accumulation of at least 150 minutes of MVPA per week. These guidelines are in line with physical activity recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO) and are being adopted by other countries as well.

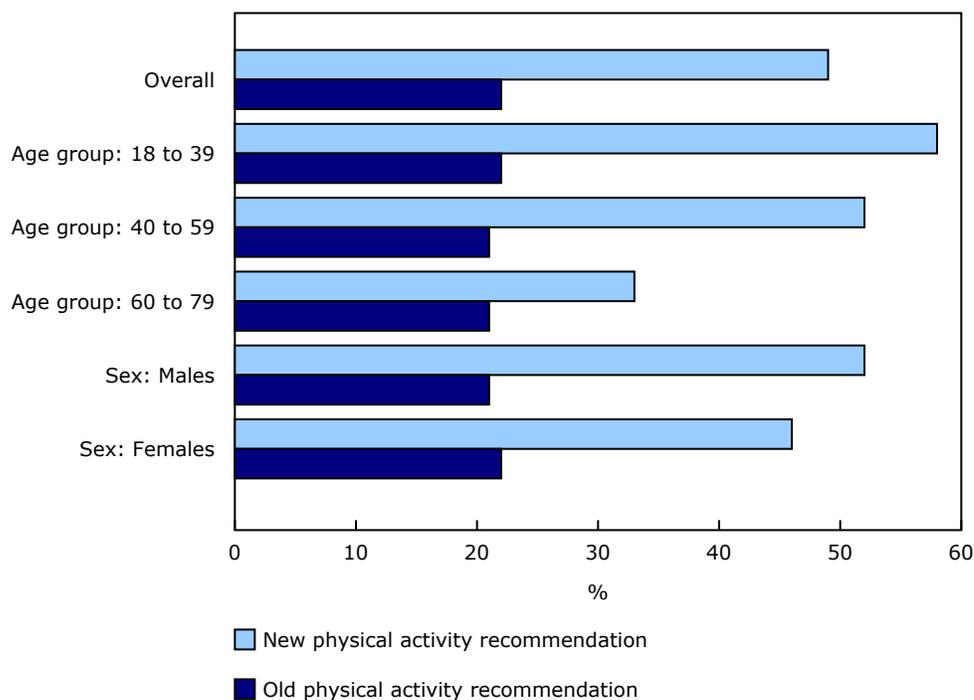
The old guidelines (*Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults aged 18-64 and Older Adults aged 65 years and older*) recommended that adults aged 18 and over accumulate a total of at least 150 minutes of MVPA per week, performed in sessions of at least 10 minutes. While the new recommendation suggests the same number of minutes, the evidence has demonstrated that physical activity does not need to be accumulated over multiple sessions of at least 10 minutes for health benefits, as long as the weekly total of at least 150 minutes of MVPA is achieved.

CHMS results from 2018 and 2019 show that more than twice as many Canadian adults aged 18 to 79 meet the new recommended target of accumulating at least 150 minutes per week of MVPA (49%) compared to 22% when using the old physical activity guidelines (Chart 1). This trend is similar across previous cycles (2009-2017). These results are based on a representative sample of Canadians who were asked to wear an electronic physical activity monitor that measures their physical activity levels, which provides more accurate and reliable information than self-reported physical activity data.



**Chart 1**

**Percentage of adults meeting the new and old weekly moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) recommendation, accumulation of all minutes compared with the 10-minute session requirement, by age group and sex, Canadians aged 18 to 79, 2018 and 2019**



**Note(s):** The old guidelines (*Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults and Older Adults*) recommended 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) per week in sessions of 10 minutes or more for adults aged 18 to 79. The new physical activity recommendation is a part of the *Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults aged 18-64 years and for Adults aged 65 years and older* and suggests an accumulation of at least 150 minutes of MVPA per week (without the 10-minute session requirement).

**Source(s):** Canadian Health Measures Survey, Cycle 6 (2018 and 2019).

**Younger adults are more involved in moderate to vigorous physical activities than older adults**

When considering the new weekly recommendation, 58% of adults aged 18 to 39 years accumulated at least 150 minutes of MVPA, compared to 52% of the 40 to 59-year-olds and 33% of the 60 to 79-year-olds (Chart 1). Using the old guidelines, 22% of adults aged 18 to 39, and 21% of each of the two other older age groups met the target (Chart 1).

Overall, Canadians aged 18 to 79 years old accumulated an average of 27 minutes of MVPA per day. This average amount was generally lower among the older age group compared with the younger age groups. The youngest age group (18 to 39 years old) averaged 31 minutes per day, followed by 29 minutes per day for the 40 to 59-year-olds and 20 minutes per day for adults aged 60 to 79. These differences may be associated to factors that enable individuals to participate in physical activity. According to the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) from 2017, a smaller proportion of older adults agreed that they receive support to be physically active on a regular basis from their social network (e.g. friends, family or other people in their life), have access to free/low cost recreational facilities, have confidence in their ability to engage in physical activity, or enjoy being physically active, compared to the younger age groups. A higher proportion of younger adults having regular support to be physically active could explain the difference in daily average time of MVPA between age groups.

## **Males are more active than females, but only among the 40-59 age group**

Overall, 52% of males and 46% of females met the new recommendation of MVPA, while 21% of males and 21% of females met the old target (Chart 1).

The average daily number of minutes of MVPA was higher among males than females. This said, the only significant difference between the two groups was observed within the 40 to 59 age group, where males were the most physically active, with an average of 33 minutes per day of MVPA compared to 25 minutes for females (data not shown). The differences between sexes may be partially explained by factors that enable individuals to participate in physical activity. According to the self-reported data from CCHS (2017), males were significantly more likely to agree with six of these factors (i.e. prefers to be physically active rather than to be sitting/lying down, has confidence in ability to engage in physical activity, enjoys being physically active, has enough time, can afford the costs, and has enough energy) compared to females who were significantly more likely than males to agree with two factors (receive support to be physically active on a regular basis, and often sees people in the community being physically active).

Various forms of physical activity will influence different aspects of health and well-being, including improvement in cardiovascular fitness, strength, and mental health. For example, both sustained sessions of physical activity and short and intense sessions may benefit cardiovascular health, muscular strength and bone health. The updated guidelines capture engagement in a wider range of activities and an increase in the proportion of those meeting them is expected. These results show that removing the 10-minute sessions criteria from the most recent recommendation has led to an increase in the number of Canadians who are meeting the requirements of healthy active living. A healthy lifestyle, which includes being physically active on a regular basis and minimizing the amount of time being sedentary, contributes to the improvement of health and overall well-being. Understanding the factors that encourage regular physical activity is also important to promote the overall healthy lifestyle of Canadians. Canadians are encouraged to integrate physical activity into their everyday life; whether at home, at school, at work, or at play...every minute counts.

### Note to readers

The Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS) is currently the only ongoing nationally-representative data source for measured physical fitness in Canada and thus represents an important mechanism to track changes in fitness levels.

The 2018 and 2019 reference period refers to Cycle 6 of the CHMS.

The target population for the CHMS consists of persons 3 to 79 years of age living in the 10 provinces. The observed population excludes: persons living in the three territories; persons living on reserves and other Indigenous settlements in the provinces; full-time members of the Canadian Forces; the institutionalized population and residents of certain remote regions. Altogether these exclusions represent approximately 3% of the target population.

Survey weight and bootstrap weight files and instructions are available for combining Cycle 6 Canadian Health Measures Survey data (where possible) with equivalent data from Cycles 1 to 5.

The Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults aged 18-64 years and for Adults aged 65 years and older were developed by the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP), the Public Health Agency of Canada, Queen's University, ParticipACTION, and a network of researchers and stakeholders from across Canada.

Adults aged 18 to 64 years and 65 years and older will follow the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines if they meet all three of the following recommendations:

- *Performing physical activity: accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity; participate in muscle strengthening activities at least twice a week and in several hours of light physical activities. Adults aged 65 years and older must include physical activities that challenge balance.*
- *Getting sufficient sleep (typically 7 to 9 hours per night for 18 to 64 years old and 7 to 8 hours per night for 65 years and older).*
- *Limiting sedentary time to 8 hours or less (including no more than 3 hours of recreational screen time).*

**Available tables:** [13-10-0324-01](#), [13-10-0338-01](#), [13-10-0339-01](#), [13-10-0388-01](#), [13-10-0755-01](#) and [13-10-0821-01](#).

**Definitions, data sources and methods:** survey number [5071](#).

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](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).