

# Health Reports, May 2022

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The May 2022 issue of *Health Reports* contains three articles.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact on the physical activity of youth but not adults. A new study in *Health Reports*, entitled "[The unequal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the physical activity habits of Canadians](#)," compared self-reported physical activity data collected before the pandemic (fall of 2018) and during the pandemic (fall of 2020).

## Physical activity decreased by two hours per week among youth

Youth reported accumulating, on average, two hours less physical activity per week in the fall of 2020 compared with the fall of 2018. The percentage of youth meeting the Canadian physical activity recommendation for children and youth (60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity) dropped from 51% in the fall of 2018 to 37% in the fall of 2020.

Physical activity decreased more among youth living in urban areas compared with rural areas. Physical activity decreased more among youth from Ontario, Quebec and the Prairies compared with youth from the Atlantic provinces and British Columbia.

While some variation in magnitude of change from 2018 to 2020 was evident between the sub-groups examined, physical activity decreased regardless of household income and education, family structure and whether youth were immigrant, Indigenous or designated as a visible minority.

## Significant increases in physical activity among adults aged 50 years and older

There was no change in the percentage of adults aged 18 and older meeting the Canadian physical activity recommendation (150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity) from the fall of 2018 (53%) to the fall of 2020 (53%). When examined by age group, weekly physical activity was stable from fall 2018 to fall 2020 among 18 to 49 year olds, while significant increases were observed among adults aged 50 to 64 years (+41 minutes per week), 65 to 79 years (+55 minutes per week) and 80+ years (+20 minutes per week).

Increases in physical activity were statistically significant among non-immigrant, non-Indigenous, those not designated as a visible minority, those living in urban areas and those with a postsecondary degree.

The majority of the decline in physical activity among youth is explained by decreases in recreation and school-based activity. Data from the Retail Commodity Survey indicate that Canadians increased their spending on exercise equipment by 24% in the fall of 2020 compared with the fall of 2018, suggesting that some adults pivoted to home-based activity during the pandemic.

## Prevalence of suicidal ideation was significantly higher in 2021 than in 2019, pre-pandemic

The article "[Prevalence of suicidal ideation among adults in Canada: Results of the second Survey on COVID-19 and mental health](#)," by researchers with the Public Health Agency of Canada, examined the prevalence of suicidal ideation among adults in Canada. It did so by using the 2021 Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health (conducted between February 1 and May 7, 2021), and compared it with the prevalence in the 2019 Canadian Community Health Survey.

Among adults in Canada, the prevalence of suicidal ideation since the pandemic began was 4.2%, which was significantly higher than the pre-pandemic prevalence of 2.7% in 2019. A statistically significant increase in prevalence was observed among females and males, age groups younger than 65, and several other sociodemographic groups, as well as in British Columbia, the Prairie provinces and Ontario.



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People who were younger than 65 years, were born in Canada, had lower educational attainment, or were never married were significantly more likely to report suicidal ideation than others during the pandemic.

A third article, "[Validation of the mental health continuum: Short form among Canadian Armed Forces personnel](#)," was also released today.

**Note to readers**

For further reading on physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic, see these related articles:

[Exercise and screen time during the COVID-19 pandemic](#);

[Youth – but not adults – reported less physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

The articles "[Validation of the mental health continuum: Short form among Canadian Armed Forces personnel](#)," "[Prevalence of suicidal ideation among adults in Canada: Results of the second Survey on COVID-19 and mental health](#)" and "[The unequal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the physical activity habits of Canadians](#)" are now available in the May 2022 online issue of *Health Reports*, Vol. 33, No. 5 ([82-003-X](#)).

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; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).