

Article

Health Fact Sheet

Directly measured physical activity of Canadian children and youth, 2007 to 2011

Health Statistics Division

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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 ^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 |
| * | significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$) |

Health Fact Sheets

Statistics Canada, Catalogue no.82-625-X

Directly measured physical activity of Canadian children and youth, 2007 to 2011

Regular physical activity and limited sedentary time contribute to many health benefits for children and youth, such as improved cholesterol levels, blood pressure, muscle and bone health, cardiorespiratory fitness, academic achievement, and improved mental health.^{1,2}

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.; skating, bike riding, playground activities, running, rollerblading, swimming).

Light physical activity includes activities such as light play and leisurely walking.

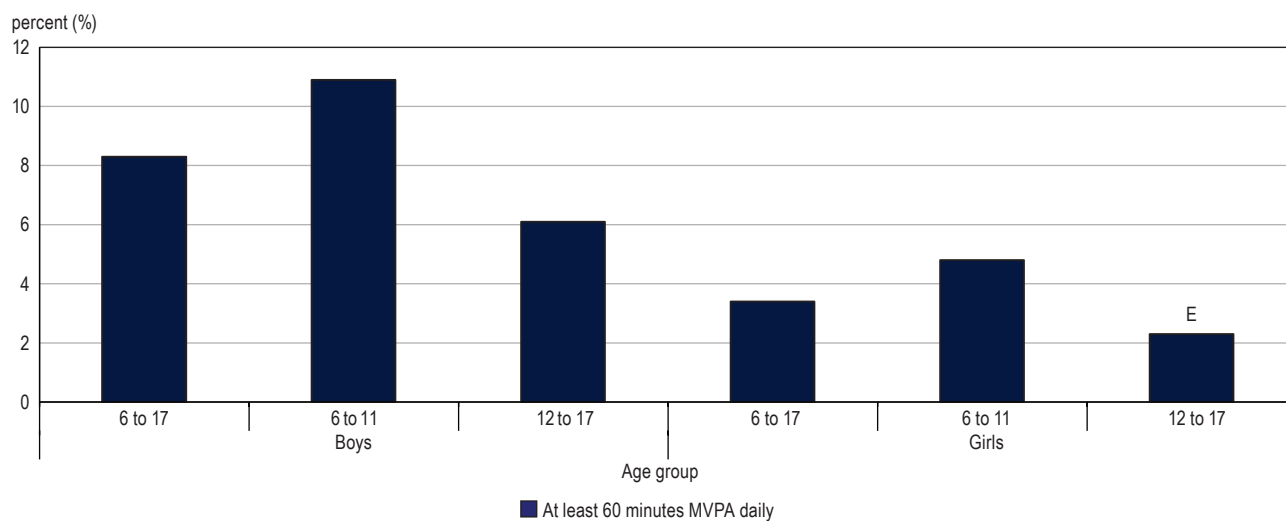
Inactive or sedentary time includes any time spent sitting or lying down (e.g.; watching television, playing computer or video games, car travel).

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that children and youth aged 6 to 17 get at least 60 minutes of MVPA per day.³ The Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines recommend that children and youth should also minimize the amount of time they spend being sedentary each day.³

Few Canadian children and youth met the physical activity guidelines

About 8% of boys and 4% of girls aged 6 to 17 met the current guidelines for MVPA (Chart 1). Younger children were more likely to have met the guidelines for MVPA than older children and youth for both boys and girls. Boys aged 6 to 11 were the most active (11% met the guidelines), while girls aged 12 to 17 were the least active (2% met the guidelines).

Chart 1 Proportion of the population meeting Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines[†], by age group and sex, household population aged 6 to 17, Canada, 2007 to 2011



E Use with caution (data with a coefficient of variation (CV) from 16.6% to 33.3%).

† Children and youth should accumulate at least 60 minutes per day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity³

Source: Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2007 to 2011. The CHMS collects health information on the Canadian household population aged 3 to 79.

Children and youth were sedentary during the majority of their waking hours

Children and youth aged 6 to 17 spend an average of 9 hours, or 64% of their waking hours, being sedentary each day (data not shown). Time spent sedentary is higher in youth aged 12 to 17 (9 hours for males and 10 hours for females) compared to children 6 to 11 years of age (8 hours for both boys and girls) (Chart 2).

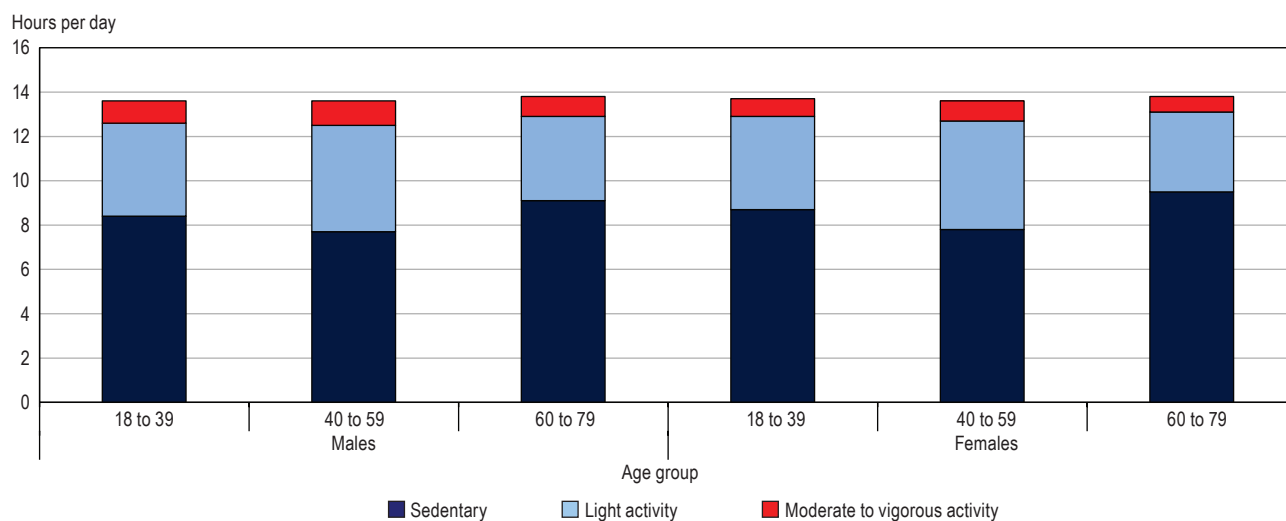
Overweight and obese boys were less likely to be active

Overweight and obese⁴ boys were not as active as normal-weight⁴ boys. Nearly 10% of normal weight boys met the guidelines of 60 minutes of MVPA daily. This compares with 6% of overweight and 5% of obese boys who were active (data not shown). No difference was found in activity levels between overweight, obese or normal-weight girls.

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. Activity monitors measure the amount of movement a person makes in order to determine the time spent in sedentary, light, and MVPA.

Chart 2 Average time during waking hours spent sedentary, in light activity, and in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, by age group and sex, household population aged 6 to 17, Canada, 2007 to 2011



Source: Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2007 to 2011. The CHMS collects health information on the Canadian household population aged 3 to 79.

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

1. Janssen I, Leblanc A. 2010. 'A systematic review of the health benefits of physical activity and fitness in school-aged children and youth'. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, vol. 7, no. 40.
2. Tremblay MS, Allana AG, Janssen I, Kho ME, Hicks A, Murumets K, Colley RC, Duggan M. 2011. 'Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children and Youth'. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*, vol. 36:59-64.
3. Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. 2011. *Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines*. Ottawa, ON. www.csep.ca/guidelines. Accessed March 1, 2012.
4. Statistics Canada. Body mass index of Canadian children and youth, 2009 to 2011. *Health Fact Sheet*. 82-625-X. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-625-x/2012001/article/11712-eng.htm>

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).