

Let's Get Active!

Planning Effective Communication Strategies

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT MONITORING PROGRAM



Mental Health Status of Canadians

The Canadian Mental Health Association indicates that mental health involves a balance in the social, physical, spiritual, economic, and mental aspects of one's life.¹ Mental health is about "living well" and feeling confident and capable about dealing with life despite the stresses and challenges that may emerge.¹

This bulletin explores Canadians' perceptions about their mental health.² Based on recent 2013 data, the majority of adults in Canada indicate that they generally have *very good* or *excellent* mental health. This proportion varies according to activity level, whereby 74% of those who are at least moderately active have *very good* or *excellent* mental health compared to 67% of those who are considered inactive.

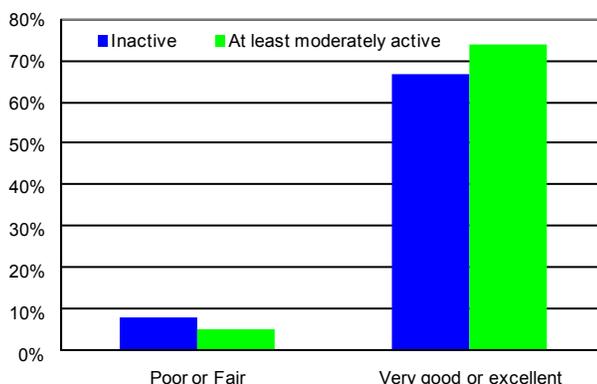
On the contrary, less than 10% of adults say that they consider themselves to have *fair* or *poor* mental health, and this also varies by activity level. For example, only 5% of those who are at least moderately active consider themselves to have lower mental health, whereas this increases to 8% among those who are inactive.

Measuring self-report, mental health status - In this study, mental health status was measured by asking participants to rate how they perceive their mental health, in general.

Measuring physical activity - In this study, the physical activity indicator measures the single domain of leisure time physical activity (LTPA). This self-report measure assesses recall of physical activity participation during the past 3 months. Activity level is calculated by multiplying the occasions by the average time reported for each activity participated in by the MET (metabolic equivalent which indicates the amount of energy expended on the activity relative to a resting state) value for each of these activities. As the question is based on 3 month recall, in order to calculate the yearly total, this product is multiplied by 4. This calculation is repeated for each PA reported. The energy expenditure value is summed across each activity and divided by 365 to yield the average energy expenditure from LTPA per day. For the purposes of this bulletin, active is considered achieving 1.5 or greater MET per day. See Bulletin 1 in this series for more information on physical activity rates based on 2013 data.

FIGURE 1

Perceived mental health by activity level, 20 years and older



Canadian Community Health Survey, 2013²

This section explores disparities between age and sex groups for associations between mental health in relation to activity level (both self-rated, see side box for further details).

Age

For *each* of the four adult age groups, a greater proportion of those who are at least moderately active say that they have *very good* or *excellent* mental health compared to those who are inactive. Significant age-related differences exist among adults 45 years and older between inactive and active adults who consider themselves to have *fair* or *poor* mental health. In comparison, differences between active and inactive adults who are less than 45 years of age are not statistically significant.



Looking at these two activity-level categories independently, we also see differences related to age. Among those who are inactive, the proportion of adults who consider themselves to be in *very good* or *excellent* mental health decreases with increasing age (i.e., 71% among 20 to 34 year olds, 66% among 35 to 64 year olds, 63% among those older than 65 year olds). Interestingly, the relationship is not as clear among those indicating *fair* or *poor* mental health, although the rate among 45 to 64 year olds is higher compared to younger (20 to 34 years) and older (65 years and older) adults.

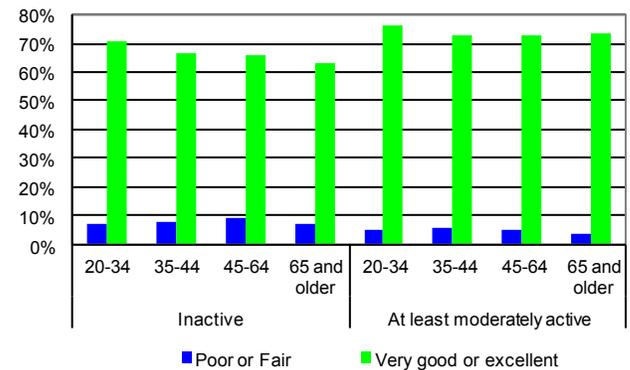
A different scenario exists among those who are at least moderately active. Indeed, the decline by age is not significant among those who are active, and the proportion citing *very good* or *excellent* mental health remains relatively high at 73% to 76% among all age groups. Generally, this lack of a significant relationship with age also appears among active adults who consider themselves in *fair* or *poor* health, with one exception that a slightly higher proportion of 35 to 44 year old active adults consider themselves in *fair* or *poor* health compared to 65 year old active adults (6% versus 4%, respectively).

Age and gender

These relationships described in the above section also vary when gender is also considered. These additional findings are summarized in this section.

The overall relationship whereby a greater proportion of at least moderately active adults say that they have *very good* or *excellent* mental health compared to those who are inactive is significant for most of the age and gender groups, with two exceptions. The findings are not significantly different for 20 to 34 year old females, and 35 to 64 year old males.

FIGURE 2
Perceived mental health by activity level by age



Canadian Community Health Survey, 2013²

Interestingly, when exploring gender and age differences in activity levels among those who consider themselves in *fair* or *poor* mental health, there are significant differences between inactive and active adults for each age and gender group, with only one exception. The relationship is not significant among 45 to 64 year old men.

Table 1 further describes the gender differences within age categories when examining these two activity-level categories independently.

References

1. Canadian Mental Health Association. Mental Health for Life. Accessed at: <http://www.cmha.ca/mental-health/mental-health-brochures/> (accessed March 5, 2015).
2. Statistics Canada. Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2013. Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. This does not constitute an endorsement by Statistics Canada of this product.

TABLE 1
Perceived mental health by activity level, age, and gender

	Inactive		At least moderately active
Very good or excellent mental health	Overall	Generally decreases with increasing age	No significant difference by age
	By Women	Higher among young adult women	
	By Men	No significant differences by age	
Fair or poor mental health	Overall	Higher for 45 to 64 year olds vs. younger and older adults	Higher for 35 to 44 year olds vs. 65+ year olds
	By Women		No significant difference by age
	By Men	No significant differences by age	



CANADIAN FITNESS & LIFESTYLE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

201-185 Somerset Street West • Ottawa, ON K2P 0J2 • (613) 233-5528 • info@cflri.ca
<http://www.cflri.ca/>

Production of this bulletin has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Sport Canada and the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of these agencies.