

# Let's Get Active!

## Planning Effective Communication Strategies

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT MONITORING PROGRAM



### Beliefs about the benefits of physical activity

Physical activity has an important role to play in the prevention of certain non-communicable diseases and conditions [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008; Warburton et al., 2006]. Despite the known benefits of physical activity, many adults and children in Canada are not sufficiently active to benefit their health.

The 2014-2015 Physical Activity Monitor asked Canadians (18 years and older) about their beliefs about the benefits of physical activity, including the prevention of heart disease, reducing stress, and maintaining the ability to do everyday tasks with age. In addition to the perceived benefits, the study explored Canadians' perceptions about the level of their *own activity* for reaping these same benefits.

#### Perceptions about the benefits of physical activity

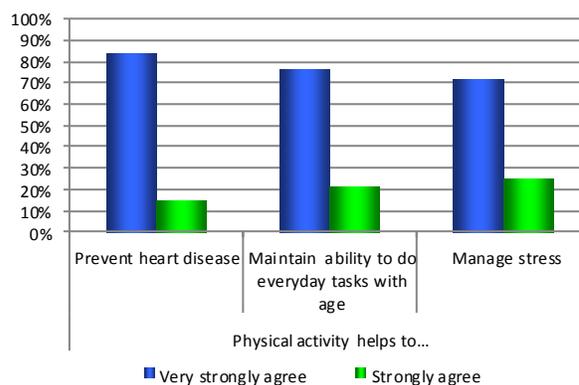
The majority of Canadians (18 years and older) agree to a great extent that physical activity helps to prevent heart disease (83% very strongly agree and 15% strongly agree), helps people to maintain their ability to do everyday tasks when they age (77% very strongly agree, 21% strongly agree), and helps to manage stress (72% very strongly agree, 25% strongly agree). For the purposes of this bulletin, only the proportions who *very strongly agree* are reported.

**Participant characteristics** – A greater proportion of women than men very strongly agree that physical activity helps to manage stress. There is an association between age and strong ratings of agreement with the benefits of physical activity. Namely,

- adults aged 25 to 44 years are more likely than older adults (65 years and older) to very strongly agree that physical activity helps to prevent heart disease.

FIGURE 1

Ratings of benefits of physical activity, overall



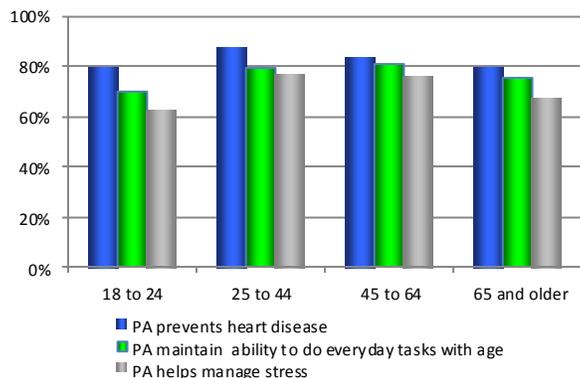
2014-2015 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

- adults aged 45 to 64 are more likely than young (18 to 24 year olds) and older adults to agree very strongly that physical activity helps to maintain functional ability with age.
- adults aged 25 to 64 are more likely than younger and older adults to very strongly agree that physical activity helps to manage stress.

A greater proportion of adults with a university education very strongly agree that physical activity helps to maintain the ability to do everyday tasks with age, and they are also more likely than those with less than secondary school graduation to very strongly agree that physical activity helps to manage stress. Compared to the national average, relatively fewer individuals who are not working for a given reason (e.g., unemployed, ill) very strongly agree that physical activity helps to manage stress.

FIGURE 2

Ratings of benefits of physical activity by age (% that very strongly agree)

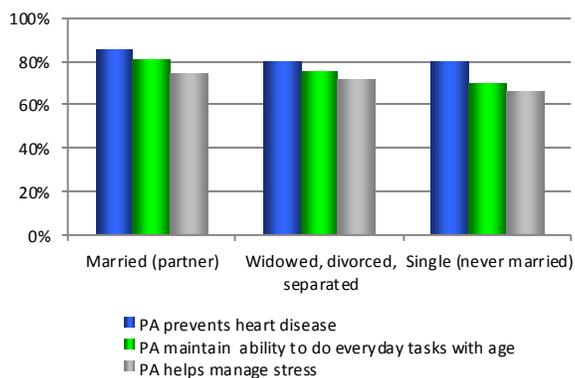


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Adults who are married or living with a partner are more likely than those who are widowed, divorced, or separated to agree very strongly that physical activity helps prevent heart disease. Similarly, a greater proportion of married adults (or those living with a partner) agree very strongly that physical activity helps to manage stress or to maintain functional ability with age compared to those who are single (or never married).

FIGURE 3

Ratings of benefits of physical activity by marital status (% that very strongly agree)

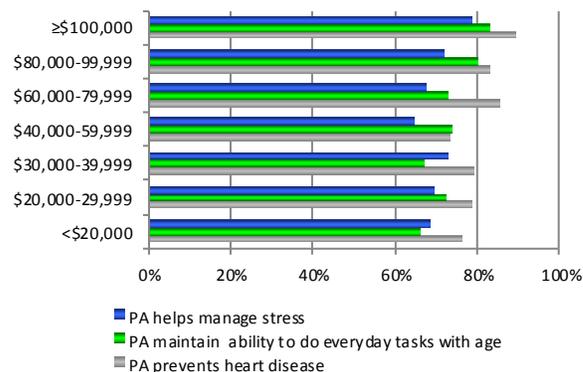


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**Household and community characteristics** – Compared to adults in some lower income household categories, relatively more adults living in the highest income households agree very strongly that physical activity helps people to maintain their ability to do everyday tasks with age, helps to reduce stress, and helps to prevent heart disease. Although community size is associated with perceptions about the benefit of physical activity for assisting with the ability to maintain ability to do everyday tasks with age or reducing stress, the relationships are not clear.

FIGURE 4

Ratings of benefits of physical activity by household income (% very strongly agree)



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**Region** – Adults living in Quebec are more likely than the average, whereas those living in the Northwest Territories are less likely to agree very strongly that physical activity helps to prevent heart disease.

### Achieving enough physical activity to reap benefits of physical activity

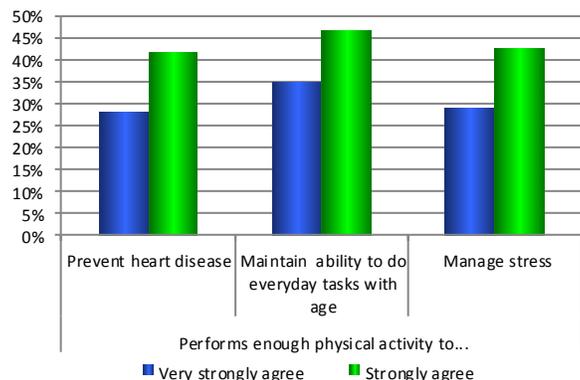
Although the majority of adults agree very strongly that physical activity provide certain benefits, considerably fewer indicate that they have *done enough* physical activity during the year to achieve the benefits. For example,

- 28% of Canadian adults very strongly agree (and 42% strongly agree) that they have done enough physical activity during the 12 months prior to the survey to prevent heart disease;
- 35% very strongly agree (and 47% strongly agree) that they have done enough physical activity to maintain the ability to do everyday tasks with age; and,
- 29% very strongly agree (and 42% strongly agree) that they have done enough physical activity to reduce stress.

For the purposes of this bulletin, only the proportions who very strongly agree are reported.

**Participant characteristics** – Although there are no significant gender differences, age-related differences exist. Compared to those aged 25 to 64 years, relatively more older adults (aged 65 years and older) agree very strongly that they have done enough physical activity in the past year to maintain the ability to do everyday tasks with age. Similarly, older adults are more likely than 25 to 44 year olds to agree very strongly that they have done enough physical activity to reduce stress. Compared to the national average, homemakers are less likely to agree very strongly that they have done enough physical activity to prevent heart disease.

**FIGURE 5**  
Ratings of sufficient activity to achieve benefits of physical activity, overall

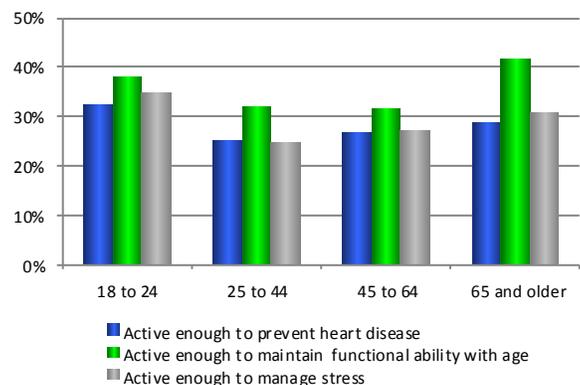


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**Household and community characteristics** – There are no significant associations between household or community characteristics and strong ratings about the adequacy of personal activity levels to achieve benefits of physical activity.

**Region** – There are very few significant regional differences in perceptions of performing enough physical activity to reap health benefits. Adults living in the Yukon are more likely than the average to agree very strongly that they have done enough physical activity to help prevent heart disease.

**FIGURE 6**  
Ratings of sufficient activity to achieve benefits of physical activity by age (% very strongly agree)



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References:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthier US.GOV. 2008. ODPHP Publication No. U0036. [Online] Available from: [www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines) (accessed November 18, 2016).

Warburton D, Whitney C, Bredin S. Health benefits of physical activity: the evidence. *CMAJ*. 2006; 174(6):801-809.

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