



# Changing the Canadian Landscape...one step at a time

## Results of the Physical Activity Monitor 2007

### Awareness of and confidence in ability to follow Canada's Physical Activity Guide

Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living<sup>1</sup> indicates that Canadians should aim for 60 minutes of light-intensity daily physical activity or at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity at least four days per week. Light-intensity physical activity is the equivalent of leisurely walking and 60 minutes can be accumulated over the day in ten-minute increments. Moderate-intensity activity demands a higher level of exertion and can be achieved through gardening or brisk walking.

### Awareness of Guide

Based on the 2007 Physical Activity Monitor, 27% of Canadians have heard of Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living, when specifically prompted. Residents of Manitoba and Saskatchewan are more likely than the average Canadian to report having heard of the Guide. Men and women are equally likely to have heard of Canada's Physical Activity Guide. Older Canadians (aged 65 years or older) are most likely to have heard of the Guide; however, this appears only among men. There are no differences in awareness of the Guide by household income, education, community size, marital size, employment status, or activity level.

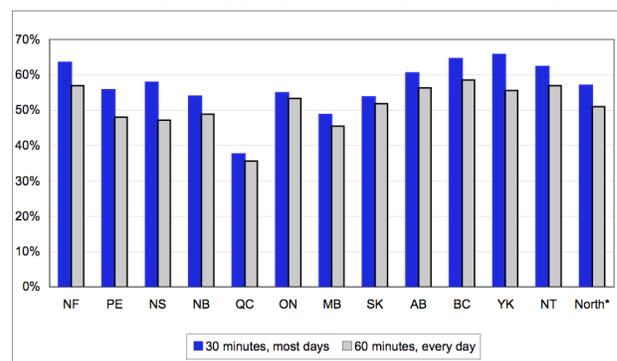
### Confidence in ability to follow Guide

The 2007 Physical Activity Monitor also asked Canadians about their confidence in their ability to meet these guidelines. In general:

- \* 52% of Canadians are very confident that they can accumulate 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week, and
- \* 49% are very confident that they can accumulate 60 minutes of light physical activity every day of the week.

**Region** Residents of Quebec are less likely than the national average to say that they are very confident that they can meet both guidelines. Residents of Newfoundland, Alberta, British Columbia, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories are more likely than the average to say that they are very confident that they can accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days, and those residing in British Columbia are more likely to be very confident that they can achieve the daily 60-minute guideline.

**FIGURE 1: SELF-EFFICACY BY PROVINCE**



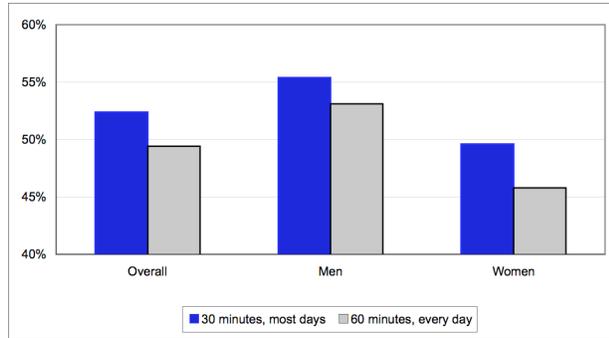
\*North includes Nunavut data

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**Age and sex** Men are more likely than women to report a high level of confidence in their ability to achieve both guidelines.



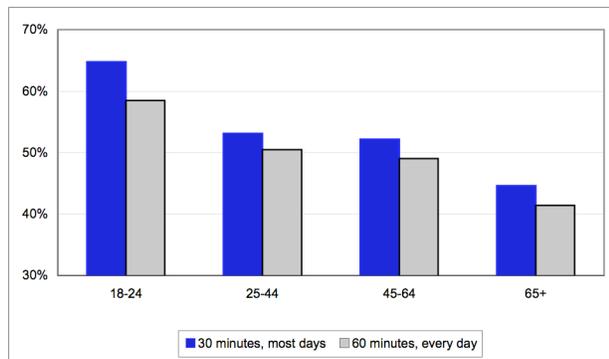
**FIGURE 2: SELF-EFFICACY BY GENDER**



2007 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Generally, confidence in one's ability to achieve 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity on most days decreases with increasing age; however, this relationship only holds for men. There is a similar age relationship for the 60-minute guideline among men as well (i.e., 18 to 44 year olds are more likely to be very confident that they can achieve 60 minutes of daily light-intensity activity compared to those aged 65 years and older). Confidence does not decrease with age for women.

**FIGURE 3: SELF-EFFICACY BY AGE**

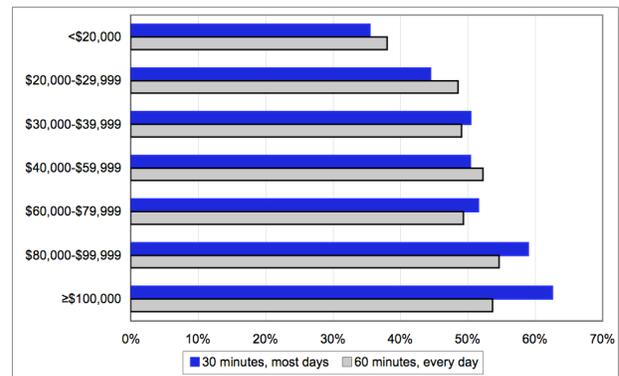


2007 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

**Socio-economic and demographic characteristics** Canadians with higher levels of education are generally more likely to be very confident that they can achieve 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. Those who have attended college are also more likely than those who have not completed high school to be very confident that they can meet the 60-minute guideline.

For both guidelines, the proportion citing a high level of confidence is generally higher among those with higher household incomes. For example, Canadians with the highest annual household incomes (\$80,000 or greater) are the most likely to state that they are very confident that they can meet the 30-minute guideline, whereas those with the lowest incomes (less than \$20,000) are the least likely to indicate this.

**FIGURE 4: SELF-EFFICACY BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

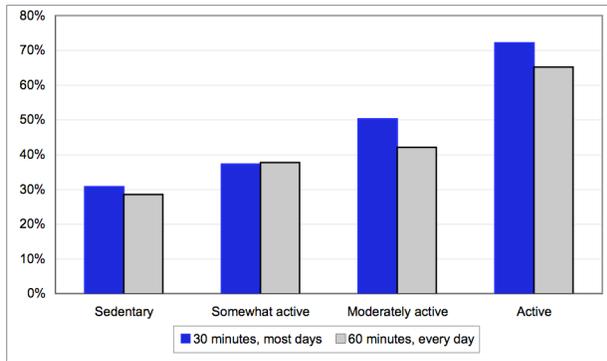


2007 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Unemployed Canadians are generally least likely to state that they are very confident that they can meet the 30-minute and the 60-minute guidelines. Full-time workers are more likely than retirees to be very confident in their ability to meet both the 30-minute and 60-minute guidelines. Canadians who have never been married are generally most likely to be very confident that they can achieve the 30-minute guideline and the 60-minute guideline. There are no significant differences in confidence to meet either the 30-minute or 60-minute guidelines among Canadians who reside in communities of different populations.

**Physical Activity** There is a general increase in confidence in the ability to meet both the 30-minute and 60-minute guidelines with increasing physical activity level. Perhaps not surprisingly, active Canadians are the most likely to state that they are very confident that they can meet both guidelines.

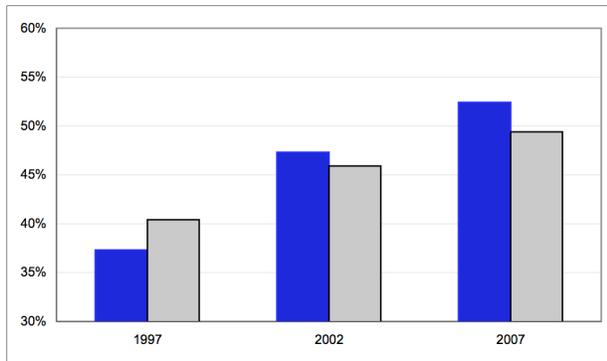
**FIGURE 5: SELF-EFFICACY BY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL**



2007 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

**Trends** Overall, the likelihood of having heard of the Activity Guide when prompted remains unchanged since 2002. In 2003 there was an increase in prompted awareness; however, recall rates in 2007 have returned to the lower 2002 rates. One can speculate that some of the increase in awareness in 2003 may have been due in part to the release of the children and youth physical activity guides late in 2002. Similar to 2002, older adults (65 years and older) are now more likely to recall the Guide compared to younger adults.

**FIGURE 6: TRENDS IN SELF-EFFICACY (AGE 18+), 1997 - 2007**



2003 and 2007 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Comparing 2007 to 1997, there has been an increase in the proportion of Canadians indicating that they are very confident that they can accumulate 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week and 60 minutes of light activity daily, and this is generally true for both genders and most age

groups. In addition, the relationship where men and younger adults are more likely to cite a high level of confidence has persisted over time.

The relationships that previously appeared for income, education, and activity level generally still appear in 2007.

**Summary** About one quarter of all Canadians say that they have heard of Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living. Recall of the Guide is higher among older adults (especially men) and among residents of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Approximately half of all Canadians state that they are very confident that they can achieve the guidelines set out by Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living. In addition, higher levels of confidence in meeting both guidelines appear among:

- Men
- Younger adults
- Those with higher levels of education
- Those with higher income levels
- Active adults

**Recommendations for Action** Recent research<sup>2</sup> indicates that unprompted recall of any physical activity guidelines is very low (4%) among adults, whereas prompted recall of Canada’s Physical Activity Guide is higher. Recall of the Guide is associated with beliefs about the benefits of physical activity, intention to be active, and with first steps taken as attempts to be more active, all of which are part of the behaviour change process. Building self-efficacy or confidence that one can do a required behaviour is also a key element in this process. The Guide is one tool that can be used in this regard, as it presents ways to accumulate sufficient daily activity at home, at school, at work, at play, and on the way.

About half of all Canadians are very confident that they can meet guidelines. Increasing this confidence or self-efficacy is an important

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element in building intention to be active. The following strategies have been recommended to increase self-efficacy.<sup>3</sup>

One main strategy to increase self-efficacy is to identify common barriers for particular groups and develop strategies to overcome these (see *Physical Activity Monitor 2007: Barriers for more detail on factors that people say limit their participation in physical activity*). Messaging strategies to build self-efficacy can be tailored to address these common barriers within particular groups by the examples provided.

Another way that has been shown to increase self-efficacy or confidence for becoming more active is through the promotion of short bouts of activity. This can increase self-efficacy as people may view it to be easier to accumulate 30 minutes of activities like brisk walking if they can break it up into two or three sessions. Suggestions such as getting off public transit a stop earlier and walking the remaining distance, or going for a short walk at lunch, may be particularly useful ideas for those faced with busy schedules.

Encouraging people to simply try to become more active also helps build self-efficacy, for example through trial classes for activities and open houses. Experiencing different ways to be active and simply trying to be more active by building activity into everyday life can enhance feelings of self-efficacy.

Receiving feedback on performance from program leaders may be particularly useful for those doing some activity but who are not yet active enough to meet guidelines. Positive reinforcement can help people to experience success, thereby boosting feelings of self-confidence in their ability to be active.

Individuals can also use self-monitoring techniques to provide themselves with feedback. For example, many Canadians own pedometers, so promoting setting achievable goals (e.g. adding 2,000 steps to current step counts) and noting progress toward meeting goals will build self-confidence to become more active.

Finally, it is important for people of all activity levels to realize that increasing their activity level is a process, and that relapses to less active periods are a common occurrence. This realization will help them avoid loss of self-confidence during periods when they are having difficulty being active.

## References

- 1 Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. (1998). *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*. Available [on-line]: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/index.html>
- 2 Cameron C, Craig CL, Bull F.C., Bauman A. (2007). Canada's physical activity guides: has their release had an impact? *Appl. Physiol. Nutr. Metab.* 32: pp. S161-S169.
- 3 Sherwood NE, Jeffery W. (2000). The behavioral determinants of exercise: Implications for physical activity interventions. *Annu Rev. Nut.* 20: pp. 21-44.

—a CFLRI project initiated in partnership with—

Healthy Living Unit, Public Health Agency of Canada, and  
the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council