

# Let's Get Active!

## Physical Activity in Canadian Communities

2009 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MONITOR: FACTS & FIGURES



### Environmental Barriers

The 2009 Physical Activity Monitor examined Canadians' perceptions of the presence of potential barriers to participation in physical activity or sport. This bulletin examines the extent to which Canadians agree that various aspects of the built environment (i.e.: poor maintenance, crime, traffic) prevent them from being active. The proportion of Canadians' overall that agree to some extent with barriers related to the built environment is as follows:

- 17% strongly agree and 8% agree that there is too much traffic in area for walking or biking,
- 16% strongly agree and 7% agree that concerns about safety prevent them from walking,
- 15% strongly agree and 9% agree that it is difficult to get to places to be active,
- 15% strongly agree and 9% agree that poorly lit sidewalks and streets prevent walking and biking,
- 14% strongly agree and 7% agree that poorly maintained sidewalks or bike lanes prevents biking
- 13% strongly agree and 7% agree that sport and recreation facilities are not well maintained, and,
- 9% strongly agree and 6% agree that too much crime on streets prevent walking or biking.

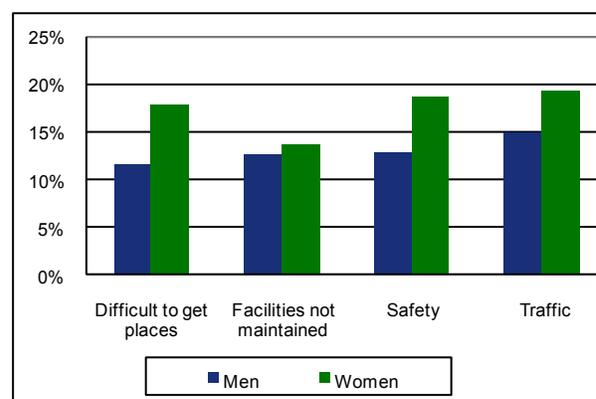
#### Region

Table 1 outlines regional differences in the proportion who strongly agree that certain aspects of the built environment in their community prevent them from being active. In general, residents

from certain provinces within the Atlantic region were more likely to strongly agree that there are components of the environment that prevent them from being active, although they were just as likely as others to report that it is difficult to get to places to be active. In contrast, too much traffic and badly maintained sidewalks and bike lanes were cited by a smaller proportion of residents in the Yukon and Quebec, respectively.

FIGURE 1

Percentage strongly agreeing with the existence of environmental barriers, by gender, 2009



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TABLE 1

Percentage strongly agreeing with key barriers related to the physical environment, by province and territory

	Percentage that strongly agree	
	Regions more likely to cite	Regions less likely to cite
Sport and recreation facilities not well maintained	NF	
Safety concerns prevents walking	NF, PE	
Too much traffic in area for walking or biking	NB	YK
Badly maintained sidewalks/bike lanes prevents biking	NF, NB, NS	QC
Poorly lit sidewalks/streets prevents walking/biking	NF, PE, NB, NS	

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**Socio-demographic characteristics**

Generally, more women than men strongly agree that there are environmental barriers preventing them from being active, though no such differences were observed regarding the maintenance of sport and recreation facilities and sidewalks and bike lanes. A greater proportion of older adults (65 years and older) strongly agree that environmental barriers exist for them, including that sport and recreation facilities are not well maintained and that concerns about safety and crime limits participation.

Table 2 presents socio-demographic characteristics of those more likely to strongly agree that aspects of the built environment prevent participation. In general, older individuals, those with a lower level of education, from lower income households, and those living in the smallest communities are more likely to strongly agree with many environmental barriers. In addition, homemakers and retirees are more likely than the average to report that poorly maintained sport and recreation facilities and that safety concerns and crime are key barriers. In addition, a greater proportion of homemakers cite badly maintained sidewalks and bicycle lanes, and poorly lit sidewalks and streets as barriers to participation, whereas a greater proportion of retirees say traffic is a barrier.

**TABLE 2**

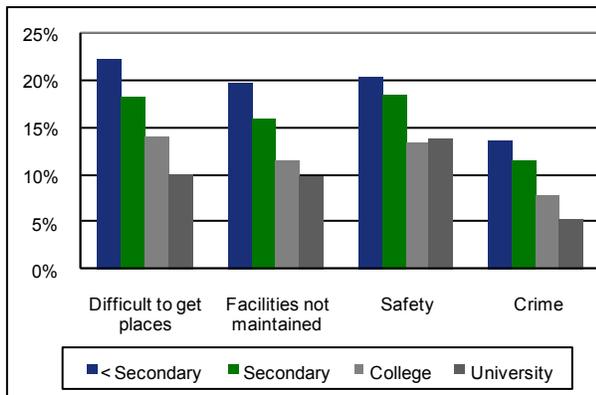
Socio-demographic characteristics of those who strongly agree that barriers exist

	Characteristics of those who strongly agree that environmental barriers exist
Difficult to get to places to be active	-Women -Older age groups, particularly seniors (65+ years) -Lower education (less than high school) -Lower household incomes -Homemakers, retirees -Smallest communities (<1,000 residents)
Sport and recreation facilities not well maintained	-Seniors (65+ years) -Lower education (less than high school) -Lower household incomes -Homemakers, retirees -Smallest communities (<1,000 residents vs. 10,000+ residents)
Concerns about safety prevents walking	-Women -Seniors (65+ years) -Lower education (< high school vs. post-secondary educated) -Lower household incomes -Homemakers, retirees -Smallest communities (<1,000 residents vs. 10,000-249,999)
Too much traffic in area for walking or biking	-Women -Seniors (65+ years vs. 18 to 44 year olds) -Less than high school (vs. post-secondary educated) -Lowest household income (vs. \$100,000 or more) -Retirees -Smallest communities (<1,000 residents vs. 10,000-249,999)
Badly maintained sidewalks/bike lanes prevents biking	-Seniors (65+ years vs. those aged 18-24 years) -Lower household income (vs. \$80,000 or more) -Homemakers
Poorly lit sidewalks and streets prevents walking/ biking	-Women -Seniors (65+ years vs. 18-24 year olds) -High school education (vs. university educated) -Lower household incomes (vs. \$100,000 or more) -Homemakers -Smaller communities (<10,000 residents)
Too much crime on streets prevents biking	-Women -Seniors -Less than high school (vs. post-secondary educated) -Lower household incomes -Homemakers and retirees

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FIGURE 2

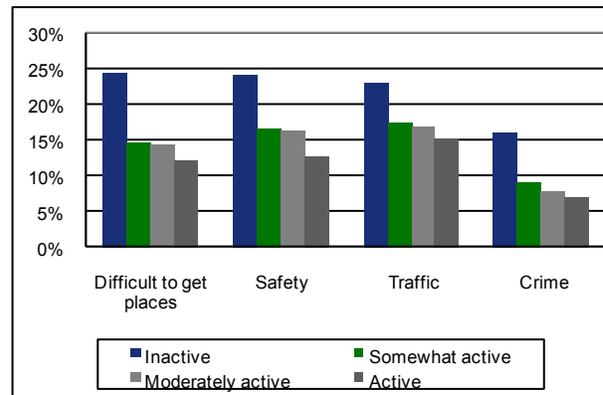
Percentage strongly agreeing environmental barriers, by education, 2009



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FIGURE 3

Percentage strongly agreeing with the existence of environmental barriers, by activity levels, 2009



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**Activity level and sport participation**

Inactive individuals are more likely to strongly agree that there are components within the built environment which prevent their participation compared to active individuals. Similarly, a greater proportion of those who do not participate in sport cite these barriers (with the exception of badly maintained sidewalks and bike lanes where there was no apparent difference by sport participation).

**Trends**

Compared to 2004, there have been changes in 2009 in the proportion of Canadians who agree to some extent of the presence of certain barriers in the built environment preventing them from being active. Specifically, there has been an increase in the proportion of Canadians who agree and strongly agree that too much traffic prevents walking or biking. Additionally, there are increases in the proportion of Canadians who agree that poor maintenance of sidewalks and bike lanes, poor lighting on sidewalks and streets, and crime prevent walking or biking. Moreover, compared to 2004, relatively fewer individuals strongly agree that sport and recreation facilities are not well maintained in 2009.

Within provinces and territories changes from 2004 include:

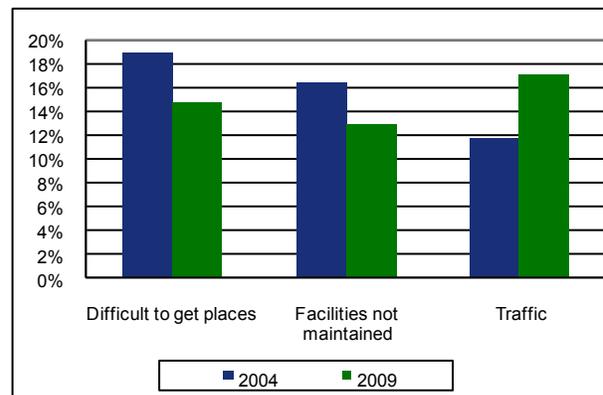
- Decreases in the proportion of residents from Manitoba and Quebec who 'strongly agree' that it is difficult to get to places to be active in 2009.
- Decrease in the proportion who strongly agree in Quebec and who agree in Ontario that recreational and sport facilities are poorly maintained in 2009.
- Increases in the proportion of residents from Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Ontario who strongly agree that too much traffic in the area prevents walking.
- Increase in the percentage of residents from Newfoundland and Ontario who strongly agree that poorly lit sidewalks and bike lanes prevent walking and cycling.

The relationships between socio-demographic characteristics and environmental barriers have generally persisted over time. Similarly, relationships between physical activity and sport participation and environmental barriers remain unchanged. However, there are a few notable changes from 2004:

- More women than men strongly agree that too much traffic and badly maintained sidewalks and bike lanes prevent walking or biking in 2009. Previously, gender differences were not significant.
- Older Canadians (65+years) are more likely than younger to strongly agree that poor maintenance of sidewalks and bike lanes prevent biking in 2009, whereas this was not evident previously.
- The previous relationship between education and poorly lit sidewalks and bike lanes is no longer significant in 2009.

FIGURE 4

Percentage strongly agreeing with the existence of environmental barriers, trends, 2004-2009



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- The relationship between gender and crime as a barrier that is evident in 2009, was not significant in 2004.
- Homemakers are now more likely than Canadians overall to strongly agree that it is difficult to get to places to be active and that the maintenance of sport and recreation facilities and of sidewalks and bicycle lanes are barriers to activity. Students are less likely than the average to strongly agree that poor maintenance of sidewalks and bike lanes is a barrier.
- Those that do not participate in sport are more likely to strongly agree that poorly lit sidewalks and streets prevent walking or biking in 2009.

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