



# Kids CAN PLAY!

ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO BE ACTIVE AT HOME, AT SCHOOL, AND IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

## Active transportation among children and youth

The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute studies the physical activity levels of children and youth through a study called CANPLAY (the *Canadian Physical Activity Levels Among Youth Study*), which uses pedometers to measure daily steps. The study also examines other factors associated with activity levels, including the use of active modes of transportation. Using data collected from 2014-2016, CANPLAY data indicates that 21% of Canadian children usually exclusively use active modes of transportation to school such as walking or bicycling, 63% exclusively use inactive modes such as buses or cars, and 16% use a combination of modes. Compared to the national average, relatively fewer children and youth living in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec usually use exclusively active modes of transportation. These provinces along with those living in Newfoundland and Labrador, are more likely to usually use inactive modes of transport to school. A greater proportion of children and youth living in Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories typically use exclusively active modes of transportation to school, compared to the average.

### Child characteristics

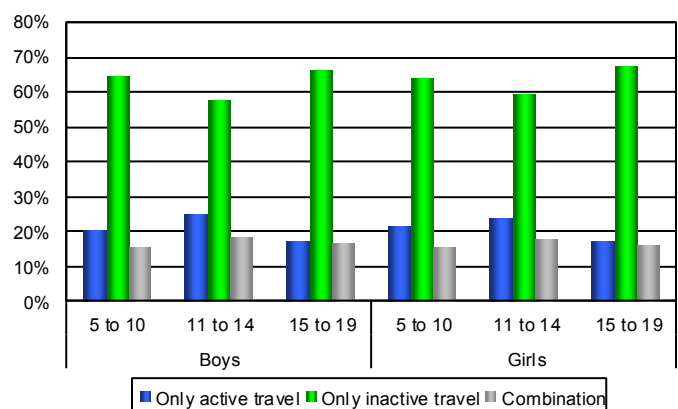
Although there is no difference between boys and girls in their usual transportation modes to school, this does vary by age. Interestingly, children and youth aged 11 to 14 are least likely to indicate that they exclusively use inactive modes. Indeed, they are more likely than 15 to 19 year olds to say that they typically actively commute to school. When examining age and gender combined, this pattern generally appears for both boys and girls with the one exception that girls aged 5 to 10 do not significantly differ from girls aged 11 to 14 in their inactive modes of commuting.

### Parent and household characteristics

A lower proportion of children and youth whose parents consider their selves to be *substantially more* active than others of the same age and gender use inactive modes of

FIGURE 1

Usual mode of travel to or from school by child's age and gender



CANPLAY study, 2014-2016 CFLRI

travel to school compared to those whose parents are *slightly less active* than peers. Children and youth living in moderate to higher income households ( $\geq \$40,000$  per year) are more likely than those in the lowest income households ( $< \$20,000$  per year) to typically use exclusively inactive modes of transportation to, or from, school.

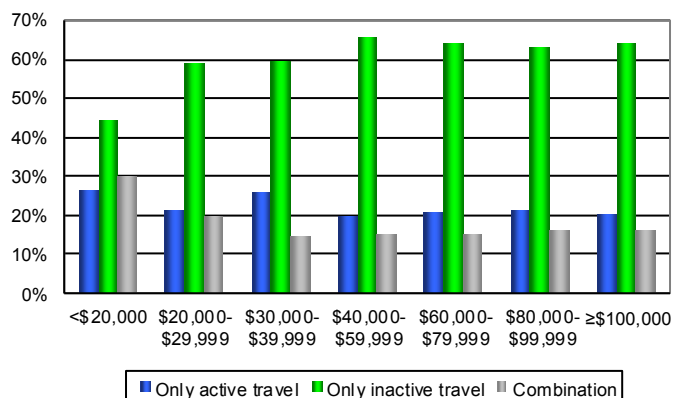
### Usual mode of travel to or from school by steps taken daily

Based on CANPLAY data collected from 2014 to 2016, children who typically use *only active* modes of transport to get to or from school take more daily steps on average compared to those who either take inactive modes only or who use a combination of both active and inactive modes (i.e. roughly 1,000 steps difference).



FIGURE 2

Usual mode of travel to, or from, school by household income



CANPLAY study, 2014-2016 CFLRI

The step difference between those who usually use only active modes of commuting and those who typically use only inactive modes are significant among particular groups, namely:

- girls;
- children and youth aged 5 to 14 (in particular girls);
- children and youth whose parents are slightly more active or just as active as their peers;
- children and youth whose parents have a university degree;
- children and youth living in some higher income households (\$80,000 to \$99,999 per year);
- those who participate in organized sport and physical activity;
- those living in British Columbia or the Yukon.

In addition, it is possible to look at the relationships within the socio-demographic variables for each of the various modes of transportation in order to look at similarities and differences. Generally speaking, relationships that exist amongst those who commute actively are similar for those who commute inactively or who combine modes of travel. For example, differences in steps related to a child's gender, age, participation in organized sport or physical activity appear regardless of the typical mode of travel to or from school.

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