



# Kids CAN PLAY!

Encouraging children to be active at home, at school, and in their communities

## Preferences of children and youth: Organization of physical activity and sport

The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's *Canadian Physical Activity Levels Among Youth* (CANPLAY) study in 2011-2012 examined children's preferences for types of physical activities and sport. According to parents, one-quarter (25%) of children prefer solely unorganized physical activities and sports, 19% prefer organized, slightly more than half (52%) prefer a combination of both organized and unorganized activities, while 4% do not like either activity. Compared to the national average, a greater proportion of children and youth in Quebec reportedly prefer solely organized activities, whereas relatively fewer indicate that they like both organized and unorganized activities equally well.

### Socio-economic and –demographic characteristics

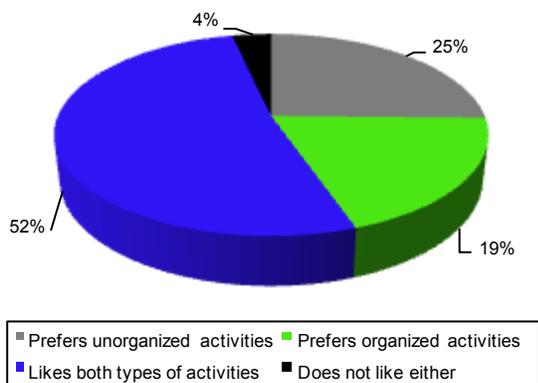
According to parents, girls are more likely than boys to prefer organized activities. A greater proportion of older children and youth (11 to 19 years) prefer organized activities compared to younger children (5 to 10 years). This pattern holds for both girls and boys; however, older girls (11 to 19 years) are more likely to say they prefer organized activities compared to boys the same age. A greater proportion of 15 to 19 years olds favour unorganized activities (this is significant only among boys) or reportedly do not like either type of activity (generally holds for both genders), compared to their younger counterparts. Conversely, the proportion that like both organized and unorganized activities equally well decrease with each increasing age group, and this pattern generally holds for both genders. Boys, aged 11 to 14 years, are more likely than girls the same age to like both types of activities equally well.

As one would expect, children who *participate* in organized physical activity or sports are more likely to *prefer* organized activities or like both types of activities equally, whereas a greater proportion of children who do not *participate* prefer solely unorganized activities or say they do not like either type of activity.

A greater proportion of children whose parents are *slightly* less active prefer unorganized activities compared to those whose parents are *just as* active or *more* active. A greater proportion of children whose

FIGURE 1

Preferences for organized or unorganized activities, overall

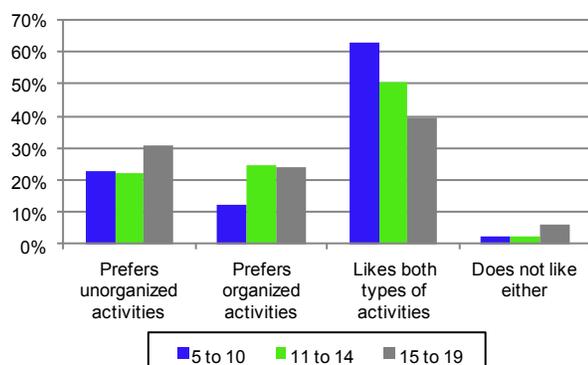


2011-2012 CANPLAY study, CFLRI



FIGURE 2

Preferences for organized or unorganized activities by age of child



2011-2012 CANPLAY study, CFLRI

parents report being *slightly more* active like both types of activities equally well, compared to children whose parents indicate that they are *slightly less* active.

Generally, higher parental education and household income is associated with a higher proportion of children and youth liking both organized and unorganized activities equally well, and a lower proportion of children preferring solely unorganized activities. In addition, children of parents with a university education are also more likely to report preferring organized activities compared to those whose parents have a college or high school education.

### Preferences by steps taken

There are no significant differences in the number of steps taken with respect to preference for either organized or unorganized activities; however, those children who like both activities equally well take more steps per day compared those who prefer solely unorganized activities or those who do not like either type of activity.

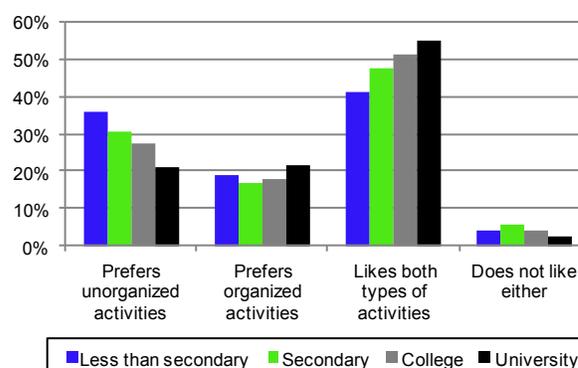
### Socio-economic and –demographic characteristics

Children who like both types of activities equally well take more steps than those who prefer solely unorganized activities. This relationship is also most evident among the following subgroups:

- both girls and boys;
- 11 to 14 year olds (particularly for girls);

FIGURE 3

Preferences for organized or unorganized activities by parent's education level



2011-2012 CANPLAY study, CFLRI

- children of parents who are *just as* or *slightly more* active than other parents;
- those who *participate* in organized activities and sport;
- children of parents with a university education;
- those living in the highest income households ( $\geq \$100,000$  per year);
- children residing in the Atlantic and the West.

Among older children aged 11 and 14, those who prefer organized activities take more steps than who prefer solely unorganized activities (this relationship was significant among girls but not boys). Among children who reside in the Atlantic region, those who prefer solely unorganized activities take the fewest steps compared to those who prefer organized or both types of activities.

Patterns that are significant within sub-populations vary slightly depending on the preference of the child. For example:

- gender differences in steps (boys taking more steps than girls) are only significant among those who like both types of activities equally well;
- step differences between those who *participate* in organized physical activity and sport and those who do not, are only significant among those who like both types of activities;
- step differences between children whose parents are slightly more active and those who are slightly less active are only significant among those who

- like both types of activities; and
- interestingly, step differences within income (highest income versus moderate income households) are only significant among children who prefer exclusively organized activities.

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