

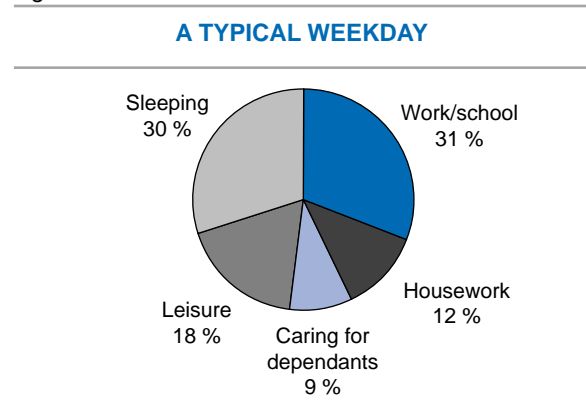
How Canadians spend their time

What's a typical day like for the average Canadian? And how much time do we have for participating in physical activity? In conducting the 1995 Physical Activity Monitor, the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute looked at the time constraints facing over 2500 Canadians.

Asked how many hours they spent in five major activities in the past month, Canadians revealed that in a typical weekday (Figure 1) they spend an average of

- seven hours at work or school, including commuting;
- seven hours sleeping;
- three hours on housework;
- two hours caring for children and dependants;
- four hours on leisure.

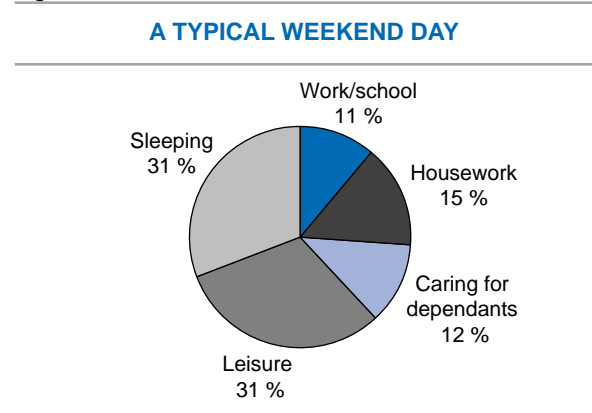
Figure 1



1995 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

As would be expected, the time spent doing work or school work goes down during the weekend (Figure 2). Instead, more time is spent on housework and in caring for children and dependants, leaving seven and a half hours of leisure time.

Figure 2



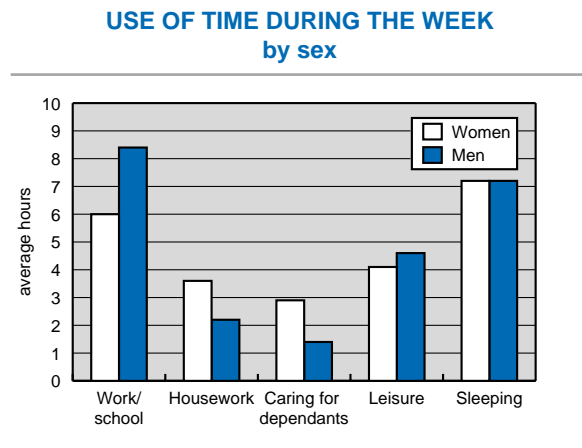
1995 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Age and sex differences

On average, women spend more time both during the week and on weekends caring for dependants and doing housework and chores (Figures 3 and 4). Men spend more time at work or at school. In the end, women have slightly less leisure time than men: one half hour less on weekdays and one hour less on weekend days.

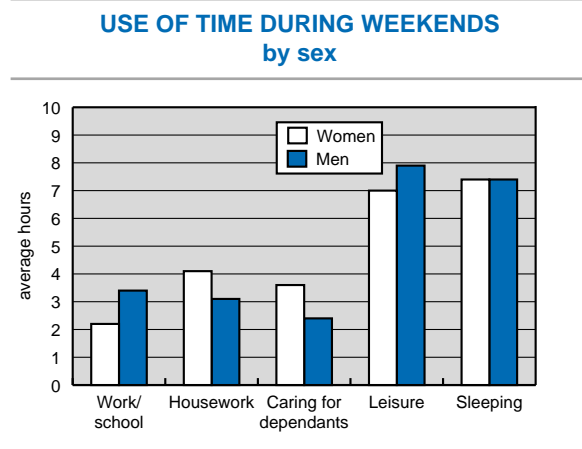


Figure 3



1995 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Figure 4



1995 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

The average time spent on work and school (including commuting) is over eight hours among 18 to 44 year olds and declines in the older age groups, as people retire from the workforce (Table 1). Leisure time is at a premium in the 25–44 age group. On weekdays Canadians in this age group have less than three hours of leisure time, compared with over four hours among young and middle-aged adults and over nine hours among older adults. Instead, the 25–44 age group spends time caring for children and dependants.

Table 1

| Age | Average number of hours spent on | | | | |
|-------|----------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|-------|
| | Work/school | House-work | Caring for dependants | Leisure | Sleep |
| 18-24 | 9.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.5 | 7.5 |
| 25-44 | 8.5 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 7.0 |
| 45-64 | 7.0 | 3.5 | 1.5 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| 65+ | 1.0 | 5.0 | 1.0 | 9.5 | 7.5 |

1995 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Family composition

A look at family composition corroborates this finding. Adults with children under 18 living at home have considerably less time for leisure, the difference being made up in the time spent caring for children and dependants.

People who never married spend the most time on work and school activities and the least on housework and caring for dependants. This result is likely related to age, since people who never married tend to be younger than people living with a partner and those widowed, divorced, or separated.

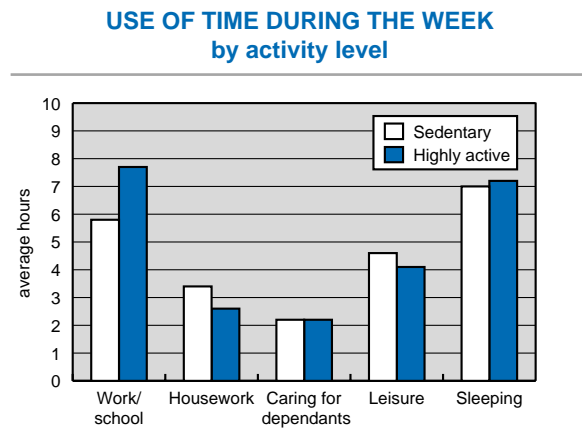
For their part, widowed, divorced, or separated individuals, who tend to be older, have more time available for leisure than do those who live with a partner and those who never married.

Activity level

Lack of time is often reported as a barrier to physical activity.¹ Indeed, this survey shows that the potential importance of time as a barrier increases for people who spend more time at work and school and for people who have less time available for leisure.

Yet people who are highly active **do not** have more leisure time than people who are sedentary (Figure 5). Highly active people spend more hours at work and school, and they spend about the same amount of time on housework, caring for dependants, and sleeping.

Figure 5



1995 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Employment status

During the week, employed workers and students typically spend 10 hours on work or school, including commuting. Homemakers spend about five hours doing housework and seven hours caring for dependants. Retired Canadians have the most time available for leisure activities (nine hours), followed by unemployed individuals, who have about seven hours of leisure time. Students, homemakers, and employed workers have the least amount of leisure time, between three and four hours.

Not surprisingly, results also show that stress levels increase as leisure time decreases and as work demands increase. However, this is mitigated to some extent for those with more leisure time available on weekends as they are more likely to report feeling relaxed.

It is sometimes argued that people who work in more physically demanding jobs use leisure time to relax instead of being active. However, the 1995 Physical Activity Monitor shows that Canadians who spend little energy on leisure-time physical activity also spend little energy at work or school. Conversely, those who spend the most energy at work or school, as well as in housework, are less likely to be sedentary when it comes to leisure-time physical activity.

Respondents were asked to choose one of four statements describing their level of activity while working and doing housework and chores. Most report that they tend to “sit or stand during most of the day” at work and school. By comparison, the majority of homemakers tend to “carry light loads or climb stairs” while doing housework.

Despite this, homemakers have a lower score when it comes to adding up the energy expended during work, housework and chores, and leisure-time physical activity. They expend 18 METS on all three occupations combined, compared with 26 METS for the average person. (A MET is a multiple of the metabolic resting rate; it is a measure of how much energy people spend over and above just “existing.”)

Leisure implications

With advances in technology, our lives have become more sedentary at work, school, and home. Leisure-time physical activity is thus an important opportunity for energy expenditure. For those in sedentary jobs, leisure-time physical activity is often the main opportunity for more intense activity.

The finding that time available for leisure is not related to physical activity level indicates that people who are active have discovered ways to overcome time constraints due to work, school, housework, chores, and caring for dependants. Physical activity can indeed be done in leisure or integrated into activities of daily life. Recommendations for leisure-time planning follow the same line of thinking:

- Address the special needs of 25–44 year olds, who have the least amount of leisure time and the heaviest time commitments with work, school, and caring for dependants. Teach alternative ways of fitting physical activity into busy schedules.
- Emphasize the stress-reducing potential of physical activity.

- Rethink urban planning to provide safe trails for active commuting between work, schools, shopping areas, and residential areas, thus favoring the incorporation of physical activity into daily activities.
- Consider workplace campaigns for active commuting and opportunities for activity at or near work.
- Emphasize the personal rewards of physical activity for Canadians with ample leisure time, mainly the retired and the unemployed. Highlight the opportunity for enjoyment, trying new things, developing new skills, getting together with other people, and getting outdoors by observing flora and fauna. Pitch physical activity to older Canadians as an invaluable medicine that is easy to take, inexpensive, enjoyable, and an outlet to express creativity.
- Focus on leisure time as a major thrust for initiatives, since it is an important time for physical activity, particularly the more intense choices of physical activity.
- Consider offering outreach services rather than structured programs during the week, since leisure time is at a premium for most Canadians on weekdays. Encourage people to remain active with their own routine, be it active commuting or exercising at home in front of the television.
- Focus educational campaigns on the immediate benefits of physical activity—enjoyment, stress reduction, relaxation, personal expression, social interaction—and how to incorporate physical activity into one's daily life in a hectic world.

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References

- ¹ Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. (1996). Barriers to physical activity. *Progress in Prevention*, Bulletin no. 4.

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Time use on weekdays

1995 Physical Activity Monitor

| | Hours ¹ spent on | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---|---------|----------|
| | Work or school | Housework | Caring for children and dependants | Leisure | Sleeping |
| TOTAL, ADULTS (18+) | 7.0 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| women | 6.0 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| men | 8.5 | 2.0 | 1.5 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| 18–24 | 9.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.5 | 7.5 |
| women | 8.5 | 2.5 | 1.5 | 4.0 | 7.5 |
| men | 9.0 | 1.5 | 0.5 | 5.0 | 7.5 |
| 25–44 | 8.5 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 7.0 |
| women | 7.0 | 2.5 | 4.5 | 2.5 | 7.0 |
| men | 10.0 | 1.5 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 7.0 |
| 45–64 | 7.0 | 3.5 | 1.5 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| women | 6.0 | 4.5 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| men | 8.5 | 2.5 | 1.0 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| 65+ | 1.0 | 5.0 | 1.0 | 9.5 | 7.5 |
| women | <0.5 | 6.0 | 1.0 | 9.5 | 7.0 |
| men | 2.5 | 4.0 | 0.5 | 9.0 | 7.5 |
| EDUCATION LEVEL | | | | | |
| Less than secondary | 5.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 5.5 | 7.0 |
| Secondary | 6.5 | 3.0 | 2.5 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| College | 8.0 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| University | 8.5 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| HOUSEHOLD INCOME | | | | | |
| < \$20,000 | 5.0 | 3.5 | 1.5 | 6.0 | 7.0 |
| \$20,000–29,999 | 7.0 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| \$30,000–39,999 | 6.5 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| \$40,000–59,999 | 7.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| \$60,000–79,999 | 9.0 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 3.5 | 7.0 |
| \$80,000–99,999 | 9.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 3.5 | 7.0 |
| ≥ \$100,000 | 9.5 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 7.0 |
| EMPLOYMENT STATUS | | | | | |
| Full-time worker | 10.5 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 7.0 |
| Part-time worker | 8.0 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 3.5 | 7.0 |
| Unemployed | 2.5 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| Homemaker | 1.0 | 5.0 | 6.5 | 3.0 | 7.5 |
| Student | 9.5 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| Retired | 0.5 | 5.5 | 1.0 | 9.5 | 7.5 |

¹ Values are rounded to the nearest half hour.

(cont'd)

| | Hours ¹ spent on | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---|---------|----------|
| | Work or school | Housework | Caring for children and dependants | Leisure | Sleeping |
| COMMUNITY SIZE | | | | | |
| < 1,000 | 6.0 | 3.5 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 7.5 |
| 1,000–9,999 | 6.5 | 3.0 | 2.5 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| 10,000–74,999 | 7.5 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| 75,000–299,999 | 7.5 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| ≥ 300,000 | 8.0 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| FAMILY COMPOSITION | | | | | |
| Living with a partner | 7.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| with children at home | 7.5 | 2.5 | 5.0 | 2.0 | 7.0 |
| without children at home | 6.5 | 3.5 | 1.0 | 5.5 | 7.5 |
| Widowed, divorced, separated | 4.5 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 6.0 | 7.0 |
| with children at home | 7.0 | 2.5 | 6.0 | 2.0 | 6.5 |
| without children at home | 4.0 | 4.0 | 1.0 | 7.0 | 7.0 |
| Never married | 9.5 | 2.0 | 0.5 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| with children at home | 6.5 | 2.5 | 4.0 | 3.0 | 7.5 |
| without children at home | 9.5 | 2.0 | <0.5 | 5.0 | 7.0 |
| ENERGY EXPENDITURE | | | | | |
| Active (≥3 KKD ²) | 7.5 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| Moderately active (1.5–2.9 KKD) | 7.0 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| Somewhat active (0.5–1.4 KKD) | 7.5 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| Sedentary (<0.5 KKD) | 6.0 | 3.5 | 2.0 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| ACTIVITY PATTERN | | | | | |
| ≥ Every other day | 7.0 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| ≥ Twice a week | 7.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| < Twice a week | 7.5 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |

1 Values are rounded to the nearest half hour.

2 Kilojoules/kilogram of body weight/day; an energy expenditure of 3 KKD is equivalent to walking one hour every day.

Time use on weekends

1995 Physical Activity Monitor

| | Hours ¹ spent on | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---|---------|----------|
| | Work or school | Housework | Caring for children and dependants | Leisure | Sleeping |
| TOTAL, ADULTS (18+) | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.5 | 7.5 |
| <i>women</i> | 2.0 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| <i>men</i> | 3.5 | 3.0 | 2.5 | 8.0 | 7.5 |
| 18–24 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 1.5 | 8.5 | 8.0 |
| <i>women</i> | 4.0 | 3.0 | 1.5 | 7.5 | 8.0 |
| <i>men</i> | 3.5 | 2.5 | 1.0 | 9.0 | 7.5 |
| 25–44 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 4.5 | 6.0 | 7.5 |
| <i>women</i> | 2.5 | 3.5 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 7.5 |
| <i>men</i> | 4.0 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 6.0 | 7.5 |
| 45–64 | 2.5 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 8.0 | 7.0 |
| <i>women</i> | 2.0 | 5.0 | 2.5 | 7.5 | 7.0 |
| <i>men</i> | 3.5 | 3.5 | 2.0 | 8.0 | 7.0 |
| 65+ | <0.5 | 5.0 | 0.5 | 11.0 | 7.0 |
| <i>women</i> | <0.5 | 6.0 | 1.0 | 10.5 | 7.0 |
| <i>men</i> | 0.5 | 3.5 | 0.5 | 12.0 | 7.5 |
| EDUCATION LEVEL | | | | | |
| <i>Less than secondary</i> | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.5 | 8.0 | 7.5 |
| <i>Secondary</i> | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| <i>College</i> | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| <i>University</i> | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| HOUSEHOLD INCOME | | | | | |
| < \$20,000 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 8.5 | 7.5 |
| \$20,000–29,999 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 7.5 | 7.5 |
| \$30,000–39,999 | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 7.0 | 7.0 |
| \$40,000–59,999 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 6.5 | 7.5 |
| \$60,000–79,999 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 6.5 | 7.5 |
| \$80,000–99,999 | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| ≥ \$100,000 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.5 | 7.5 |
| EMPLOYMENT STATUS | | | | | |
| <i>Full-time worker</i> | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| <i>Part-time worker</i> | 4.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 6.0 | 7.5 |
| <i>Unemployed</i> | 0.5 | 4.0 | 2.5 | 9.5 | 7.5 |
| <i>Homemaker</i> | 0.5 | 4.5 | 6.5 | 5.5 | 7.5 |
| <i>Student</i> | 4.0 | 2.5 | 1.5 | 8.0 | 7.5 |
| <i>Retired</i> | <0.5 | 4.5 | 1.0 | 11.0 | 7.0 |

¹ Values are rounded to the nearest half hour.

(cont'd)

| | Hours ¹ spent on | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---|---------|----------|
| | Work or school | Housework | Caring for children and dependants | Leisure | Sleeping |
| COMMUNITY SIZE | | | | | |
| < 1,000 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 2.5 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| 1,000–9,999 | 2.5 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 6.5 | 7.5 |
| 10,000–74,999 | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.5 | 7.5 |
| 75,000–299,999 | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.5 | 7.5 |
| ≥ 300,000 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 7.5 | 7.5 |
| FAMILY COMPOSITION | | | | | |
| Living with a partner | 2.5 | 3.5 | 4.0 | 6.5 | 7.5 |
| with children at home | 2.5 | 3.0 | 7.0 | 4.0 | 7.5 |
| without children at home | 2.5 | 4.5 | 1.0 | 9.0 | 7.5 |
| Widowed, divorced, separated | 2.0 | 4.5 | 3.0 | 8.0 | 7.0 |
| with children at home | 2.0 | 2.5 | 8.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| without children at home | 1.5 | 4.5 | 1.5 | 9.5 | 7.0 |
| Never married | 4.0 | 3.0 | 0.5 | 9.0 | 7.5 |
| with children at home | 3.5 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 6.0 | 7.5 |
| without children at home | 4.0 | 3.0 | 0.5 | 9.0 | 7.5 |
| ENERGY EXPENDITURE | | | | | |
| Active (≥3 KKD ²) | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.5 | 7.5 |
| Moderately active (1.5–2.9 KKD) | 2.5 | 4.0 | 3.0 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| Somewhat active (0.5–1.4 KKD) | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| Sedentary (<0.5 KKD) | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.5 | 7.0 |
| ACTIVITY PATTERN | | | | | |
| ≥ Every other day | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.5 | 7.5 |
| ≥ Twice a week | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| < Twice a week | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 7.0 | 7.0 |

1 Values are rounded to the nearest half hour.

2 Kilocalories/kilogram of body weight/day; an energy expenditure of 3 KKD is equivalent to walking one hour every day.