



# Kids CAN PLAY!

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

## Parents' perspective about the availability of after school programs

The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute examines physical activity levels of children and youth through a study called CANPLAY (the Canadian Physical Activity Levels Among Youth study), along with other factors that are associated with physical activity. Previous bulletins in this series explored children's active pursuits after school and modes of active transportation. This bulletin summarizes the findings with regards to parents' perspectives about the availability of supervised after school programs and the amount of days that their children attend these types of programs each week. This bulletin represents data collected during the two year time period from 2014 to 2016.

### Access to a supervised after school program

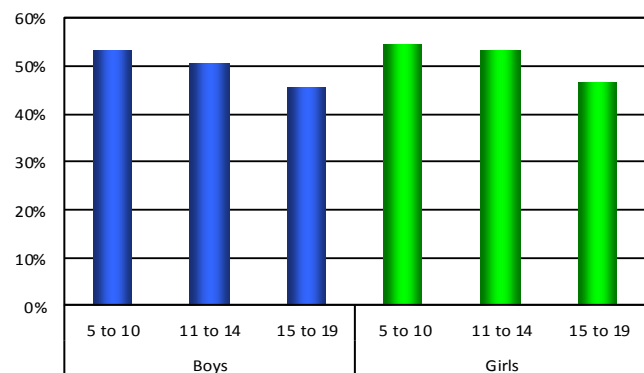
According to a sub-sample of Canadian parents, half of all Canadian children and youth (51%) have access to supervised programming during the after school period. Compared to the national average, a greater proportion of children living in British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon, whereas a lower proportion of those living in Quebec have access to an after school program.

### Child characteristics

Access to after school programming did not vary by a child's gender; however, differences are noted by age. Older children (aged 15 to 19) are least likely to have access to supervised after school programming compared to younger children (aged 5 to 14). This age-related relationship generally appears among both boys and girls. A higher percentage of children who participate in organized physical activity and sport have access to a supervised after school program compared to those who do not participate.

FIGURE 1

Access to a supervised after school program by child's age and gender



CANPLAY study, 2014-2016, CFLRI

### Parent and household characteristics

Compared to parents who are *just as* or who are *slightly less* active than their peers of the same age and sex, a greater proportion of parents who consider themselves *substantially more* active say that their children have access to a supervised after school program. Children who live in the highest income households ( $\geq \$100,000$  annually) are most likely to report having access to this type of programming.

### Access to daily after school programs by daily steps

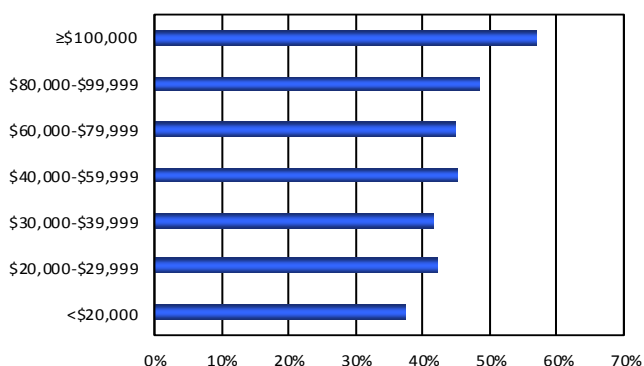
Children who have access to a supervised after school program take slightly more daily steps on average (about 700 more steps/day) than those who do not have access to this type of program.



This pattern whereby those who have access to this type of programming take more steps is significant among the following groups: both boys and girls; children whose parents are *substantially more active* than their peers; children whose parents have a university education; children living in the highest income households; and, children living in the Atlantic and Western regions.

In addition, it is possible to explore patterns in child, parent and household characteristics by those who have access to after school programs and those who do not. Relatively few differences exist between these two groups. For example, among children who have access to after school programs, those who live in the highest income households take more steps than those living in some lower income households; this relationship is not significant among those who do not have access. Similarly, children who attend an after school program average a higher number of daily steps if they reside in British Columbia or the Yukon, whereas they take fewer steps if they live New Brunswick. On the other hand, among children who do not have access to this programming, those who reside in Newfoundland and Labrador take fewer steps compared the average. Finally, among children who do not have access to after school programming, those whose parents indicate they are *slightly more* or *just as active* than their peers take more steps compared to those whose parents are *substantially less active*, whereas this relationship is not significant among those who do have access.

**FIGURE 2**  
Access to a supervised after school program by household income



CANPLAY study, 2014-2016, CFLRI

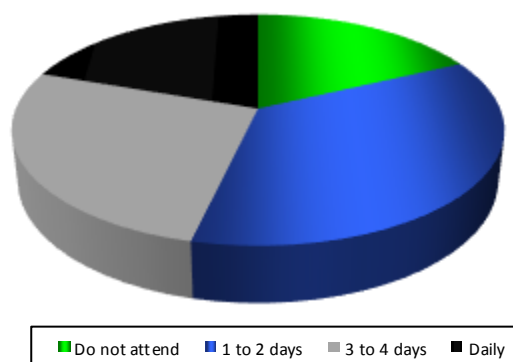
**Number of days attending after school programs**

Among the 51% of children and youth who indicate having access to supervised programs during the after school period, 36% attend this type of programming on 1 to 2 days a week, 27% attend 3 to 4 days per week, and 20% attend daily.

The remaining 18% of children do not attend an after school program, despite having access. Regional differences with respect to the number of days attending after school programs were identified. Compared to the national average, a higher percentage of children living in:

- Ontario and Nova Scotia, yet a lower percentage of those living in Quebec and British Columbia, *never* attend these types of programs;
- Quebec participate in these programs on *1 to 2 days* a week; and,
- New Brunswick and the Northwest Territories attend an after school program on a daily basis.

**FIGURE 3**  
Number of days attending after school programs, overall



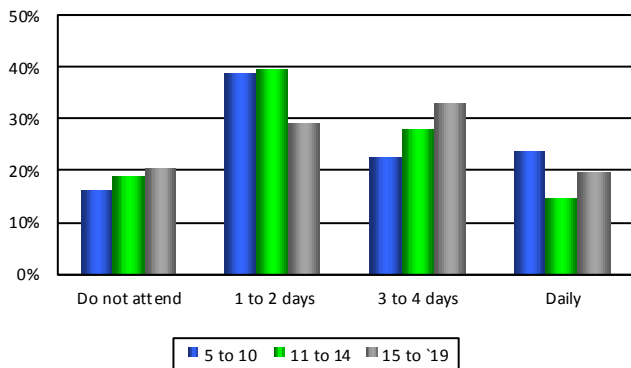
CANPLAY study, 2014-2016, CFLRI

**Child characteristics**

There are generally very few gender differences related to the number of days that children participate in after school programming with the exception that relatively more boys than girls never attend these types of programs. The number of days spent in after school programming is associated with a child’s age. Compared to the youngest children (5 to 10 years), a greater proportion of older children (15 to 19 years) attend an after school program on 3 to 4 days per week, whereas relatively fewer attend 1 to 2 days per week. This age-related pattern generally appears for boys, but is not significant among girls. Among both boys and girls, a higher percentage of 5 to 10 year olds attend on a daily basis compared to their 11 to 14 year olds counterparts.

A greater proportion of children who participate in organized physical activity and sport attend an after school program on a *frequent* basis (at least 3 days per week), whereas a greater proportion of children who do not participate in organized physical activity and sport *never* attend after school programs.

**FIGURE 4**  
Number of days attending after school programs by child's age



CANPLAY study, 2014-2016, CFLRI

### Parent and household characteristics

There are generally no differences in the frequency of attendance in after school programs by parental and household characteristics, with one exception. A greater proportion of children and youth living in the highest income households (i.e.,  $\geq \$100,000$  annually) attend these types of programs *3 to 4 days* per week compared to those living in lower income households ( $\$30,000$  to  $\$39,999$  annually), whereas those in the highest income households are generally the least likely to attend *1 to 2 days* per week.

### Number of days attending after school programs by daily steps

There are no differences in overall steps by the frequency of attendance in after school programs. When looking at child, parent and household characteristics, however, there are significant step differences by the number of days attending after school programming among certain groups. Among boys, those who attend after school programs on a *daily basis* take more steps on average compared to those who do not attend these types of programs. Similarly, older children (aged 15 to 19) who attend *at least 3 times* per week take more steps than peers of the same age who do not participate in after school programs.

Children who do not participate in organized physical activity and sport, yet attend an after school program on a *daily* basis, average more steps per day compared to those who do not attend an after school program. On the other hand, among children who do participate in organized physical activity and sport and also attend after school programs, average steps are generally similar regardless of the frequency in which they attend the program.

When looking at the number of days independently, some differences in patterns exist within child, parent, or household characteristics. There is a lack of significant gender differences in steps taken among those who do not attend an after school program; boys, however, take more steps than girls if they attend a program *at least once* a week. Among children who do not attend an after school program, participating in organized physical activity and sport results in a higher number of steps compared to those who do not engage in organized activities. Among children who do attend an after school program, however, there are no step differences between children who participate in organized physical activity and sport and those who do not, regardless of the frequency in which they attend the after school program. Among children who do not participate in an after school program, children whose parents have a university education take more steps on average than those whose parents have graduated from high school. Among those who do participate in an after school program, however, there are no significant differences in steps by parent education level, based on the frequency of attendance. Among children who participate in an after school program on a *daily* basis, those living in the highest income households ( $\geq \$100,000$  annually) take more steps than children from lower income households ( $\$40,000$  to  $\$59,999$  annually). There are, however, no significant differences by household income among those who attend less often than daily or who do not attend.

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