

Working to become active

Increasing physical activity in the Canadian workplace



Operation and ratings of physical activity programs at work

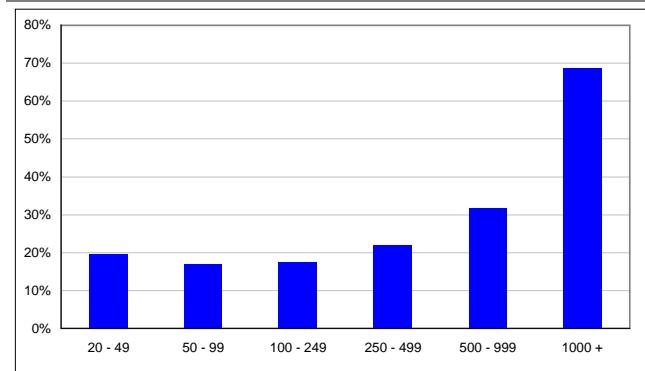
Workplace physical activity programs and facilities may be managed and delivered by the company itself, jointly through employee/employer committees, by volunteers, or by groups outside the company structure. The 2007-08 *Opportunities for Physical Activity at Work Survey* examines the operational management and delivery of workplace physical activity programs, company ratings of physical activity opportunities at work, and views about whether opportunities have increased, decreased, or remained unchanged over the previous year.

Management of physical activity opportunities

Almost one third (30%) of companies with 50 or more employees report that the company itself is responsible for managing physical activity programs at work. A further 30% state that it is a combination of an employer/employee committee, whereas 11% state that it is run by an employee association, and less than 5% report that it is led by a union or a union/management committee. One quarter of companies (25%) state that another entity is responsible for the management of the program. In addition, 18% of companies with 50 or more employees say that they employ dedicated staff to coordinate the physical activity opportunities and programs at the workplace.

Region There are no regional differences associated with the management of physical activity opportunities.

**DEDICATED STAFF PERSON
by company size, 2007-08**

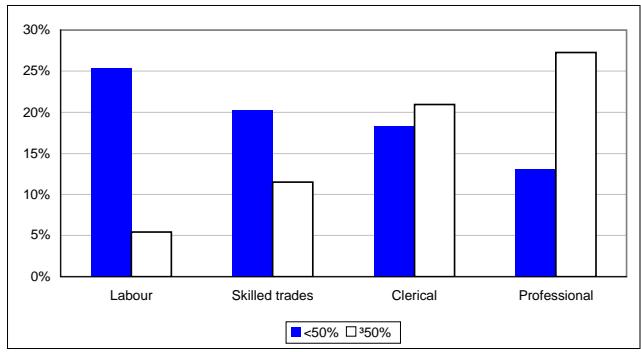


2007-08 Opportunities for Physical Activity at Work Survey, CFLRI

Workplace characteristics There are no significant relationships for the management of physical activity opportunities in terms of associated workplace characteristics (i.e., company size, location of company, distribution of employee gender or occupation within the company, etc.), with the exception of having a dedicated staff person available for this purpose. The largest workplaces (with 1,000 or more employees) are generally the most likely to employ a dedicated staff person to manage their physical activity opportunities. Workplaces with a greater proportion of professional positions ($\geq 50\%$) are more likely to employ a dedicated staff person to coordinate the physical activity opportunities at work compared to those with fewer professionals. However, companies with a relatively higher proportion of general labourers ($\geq 50\%$) are more likely *not* to have a staff person dedicated to overseeing these opportunities at work. Workplaces with relatively fewer males in the company ($< 50\%$) are more likely than those with more males to have dedicated staff for physical activity management.



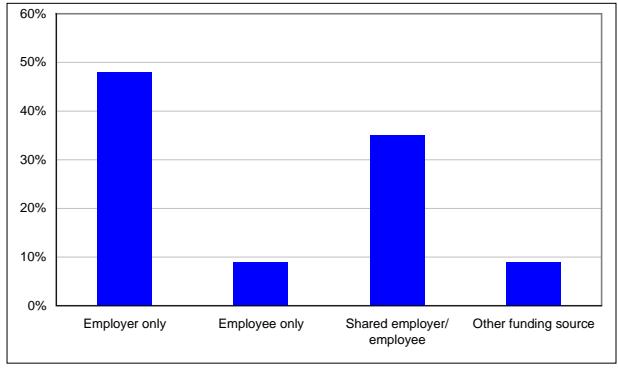
DEDICATED STAFF PERSON by profession, 2007-08



2007-08 Opportunities for Physical Activity at Work Survey, CFLRI

Funding physical activity opportunities About one half (48%) of Canadian companies indicate that the employer is responsible for funding physical activity programs at their work site. Just over one third (35%) of companies say that funding is a shared responsibility between the employer and the employee, whereas 9% state that it is the employees' responsibility to fund the physical activity opportunities at work. A further 9% cite another source of funding for their physical activity programs.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FUNDING overall, 2007-08



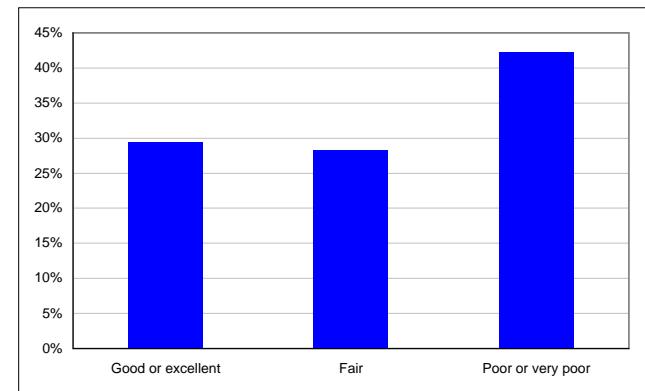
2007-08 Opportunities for Physical Activity at Work Survey, CFLRI

Region and workplace characteristics There are no significant differences across region or across the various workplace characteristics with respect to funding of physical activity opportunities.

Ratings and changes in physical activity opportunities at work More than one-quarter (29%) of workplaces with 50 or more employees rate their physical activity opportunities as good or excellent. A

further 28% rate their opportunities as fair, and 42% rate the fitness opportunities at their workplaces as poor or very poor.

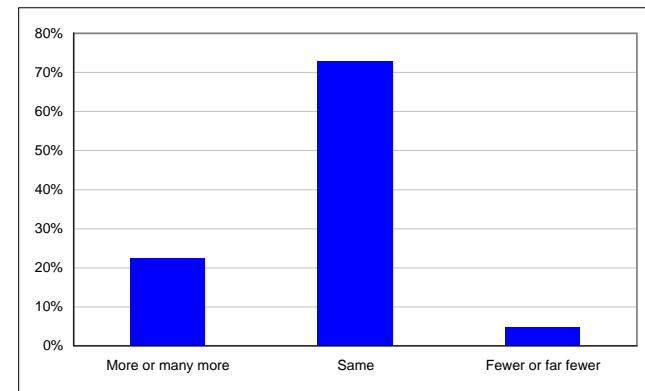
RATINGS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES overall, 2007-08



2007-08 Opportunities for Physical Activity at Work Survey, CFLRI

Although almost three quarters (73%) of companies with 50 or more employees report no substantial change in their opportunities, programs, and facilities for physical activity compared with the previous year, while 22% report having *more or many more* opportunities that they did in the previous year. Only 5% report having *fewer or far fewer* opportunities, programs and facilities. Both smaller companies (<50 employees) and these larger workplaces are similar in their reporting of the ratings and changes of physical activity opportunities.

CHANGES IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES overall, 2007-08



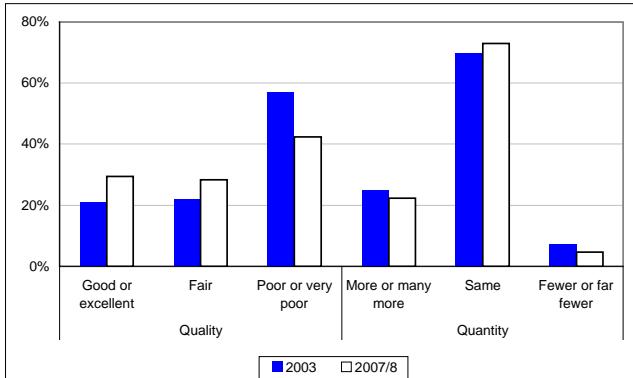
2007-08 Opportunities for Physical Activity at Work Survey, CFLRI

Region Quebec employers are more likely than all others to rate the physical activity opportunities at their workplaces as fair. There are, however, no regional differences in the proportions indicating change in the availability of opportunities over the span of the previous year.

Workplace characteristics Companies composed primarily of general labourers ($\geq 50\%$) are less likely than those with fewer general labourers to rate their physical activity opportunities as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. Smaller (fewer than 100 employees) workplaces are more likely to indicate that physical activity opportunities have stayed the same over the previous year compared to companies with 500 to 999 employees.

Trends in management and operations There have been no significant differences over time associated with the management or funding of workplace physical activity opportunities by company size. However, large companies (250 or more employees) are now more likely to indicate that they employ a dedicated staff person to handle the day-to-day coordination of physical activity programs and opportunities at work compared to 2003. Since 2003, there have been some changes in ratings of the quality and quantity of physical activity opportunities, programs, and facilities available to employees, particularly among companies with 100-249 employees. Namely, these companies are more likely to rate their opportunities as ‘good’ and are less likely to rate them as ‘very poor’. Since 2003, there have been no changes in the ratings of how opportunities, programs, and facilities for physical activity have changed from the previous year.

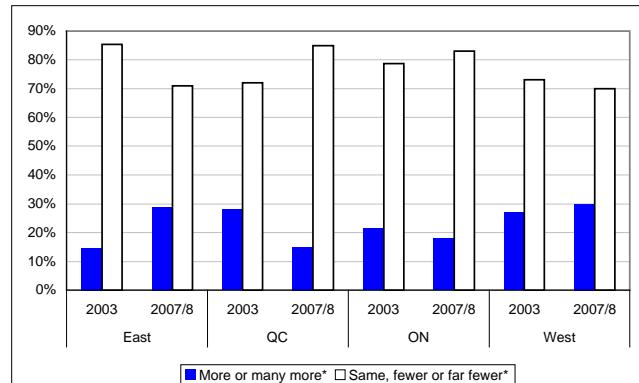
TRENDS IN RATINGS OF QUALITY AND QUANTITY Overall trends, 2003 – 2007/08



2003 & 2007-08 Opportunities for Physical Activity at Work Survey, CFLRI

Region There have been no significant regional differences since 2003 in terms of the management or funding of physical activity opportunities in the workplace. Compared to 2003, companies with 50 or more employees in Ontario are now more likely to indicate that they employ a dedicated staff person to manage the physical activity programs and opportunities at work, and they are less likely to rate the quality and quantity of physical activity opportunities, programs, and facilities as ‘very poor’.

TRENDS IN OPPORTUNITIES Trends by region, 2003 – 2007/08



2003 & 2007-08 Opportunities for Physical Activity at Work Survey, CFLRI

Recommendations for action Findings from this section indicate that 42% of companies have a bleak view of their current physical activity opportunities, rating their fitness opportunities at their workplaces as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’. Further, the majority of

companies have not seen changes to their programming in the past year, and these ratings have not changed significantly since 2003. This research bulletin series has suggested a number of recommendations to help policy-makers guide workplaces in establishing, expanding, and promoting physical opportunities at work. In addition, based on data from this bulletin, companies can be encouraged to:

- **Assign responsibility and include employees in the design and implementation of programs**

Responsibility for the management of physical activity programs in Canadian workplaces has changed little over the past fifteen years, where the employer has responsibility for the management of the workplace physical activity opportunities in approximately one-third of companies. Given this finding, and the fact that 66% of employees have minimal or no input into the development of physical activity policies, programs, and opportunities at their workplaces (see Bulletin 7 of this series), companies should include their employees in the organization and development of these types of programs to encourage interest and participation.

- **Relieve the financial burden** Roughly half of Canadian workplaces with 50 or more employees state that the employer is responsible for the funding of physical activity programs, and an additional one third share the responsibility between employer and employee. Given that just over half of companies say that the lack of company funds is a key barrier to the initiation and expansion of their physical activity programs (see Bulletin 5 “Barriers to participation in physical activity”), low-cost alternatives for incorporating physical activity at work need to be promoted to all companies. Examples of relatively low-cost activities have been cited in previous bulletins in this series, including the promotion of stair use, the promotion of active commuting, and the promotion of community opportunities to be active.

- **Build corporate commitment** Different operational practices suggest that varying strategies are required to build and maintain company commitment to programs. Companies not directly involving

management in the planning and implementation of programs may need to regularly update management on the ‘case’ for the program using research data (see http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/fitness/work/trends_e.html) and current evaluation results from their own programs to identify benefits of the program.

- **Maintain currency of offerings** Managers and staff who are involved in the planning and implementation of physical activity opportunities at work need ongoing support in terms of training and information about alternatives for physical activity. Training may include attendance at a relevant conference or subscription to online list-serves or magazines. Local resources can also help to serve this function. Those involved in implementation could learn more about local opportunities in the community and be updated through periodic contact with local and provincial or territorial government staff working in municipal recreation or public health.

