Physical Activity in the DHAs

Although differences appear in levels of physical activity across DHAs, these differences are not statistically significant (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7  Physical Activity in the DHAs, Nova Scotia (CCHS 2.1)

Note
1. Definitions of physical activity used in the CCHS are consistent with those used in the National Population Health Survey (NPHS), also conducted by Statistics Canada.

Highlights
- About half (49 percent) of Nova Scotians aged 12 and over report being physically active or moderately active.
- Physical activity level declines with age.
- People's self-reported activity level increases with their self-perceived health.
- Physically active people are less likely to suffer from chronic conditions.
- Smokers are less likely to report being physically active.
Physical Activity and the CCHS

Brisk physical activity is defined as 1 in the CCHS as having an average daily expenditure of 3.5 kilocalories per kilogram body weight (KKG). Health Canada reports that this is the level of exercise required for cardiovascular health benefits. Someone who weighs 200 pounds would require about 30 minutes of brisk walking a day to maintain this level of energy expenditure. Moderate physical activity is defined as expending an average of between 1.5 and 2.9 kilocalories per kilogram of weight per day. People who report activity levels leading to an average daily energy expenditure of less than 1.5 KKG (a level too low to offer substantial health benefits) are considered to be physically inactive. Energy expenditure in the CCHS is estimated from the responses given to a series of questions pertaining to the types of activities respondents participate in, as well as the lengths of time they spend engaged in these activities. The Physical Activity Index (PAI) separates ranges of energy expenditure into the aforementioned categories: active, moderately active, and inactive.

Who is Physically Active?

Twenty-five percent of Nova Scotians aged 12 and over report that they are regularly active, meaning they exercise at least 30 minutes a day, and only 25% meeting a minimum activity level. Almost half (51%) of Nova Scotians consider themselves to be physically inactive (Figure 1). These rates are similar for both rural and urban areas of the province. Compared to the estimates reported by CCHS 1.1, Nova Scotians’ physical activity levels have improved, with more people reporting being active or moderately active and less people reporting being inactive (Table 1). However, the situation around activity level among Nova Scotians remains discouraging with the majority of the population (51%) being inactive, as defined by the CCHS, for moderate or less activity. The physical activity levels of Nova Scotians aged 12 to 19 report being physically active or moderately active, which is up slightly from 47% in CCHS 1.1, among those aged 25 to 64, 51 percent report being physically active or moderately active, which is also up from 48% in CCHS 1.1. The rate of being physically active and moderately active declines to 40 percent for people aged 65+ (65+ (Figure 3) and, again to 32 percent for those aged 65 and over (up from 20% in CCHS 1.1) (Figure 4). This trend is similar for both men and women. The overall trend of physical activity among Nova Scotians increases with income level (Figure 3). The percentage of people who are physically active or moderately active increases from 30% for those in the lowest income group to 53 percent for those in the highest income group. Nova Scotians in the highest income category are significantly more active than those in all other income categories. This has important implications for healthy public policy suggesting that public investment in physical activity infrastructure and opportunity may be needed to level the playing field for those who are economically disadvantaged allowing them to become more physically active.

By comparing the rates of chronic conditions between physically active (active and moderately active) and inactive respondents, we can get a sense of the relationship between physical activity and health (Figure 5). The most common chronic conditions are significantly more prevalent among Nova Scotians who report their physical activity level to be inactive. Such specific conditions include arthritis, back problems, heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, and respiratory diseases. Activity levels and having a chronic condition may be “co-dependent variables” whereas inactivity increases the likelihood of developing a chronic condition, having a chronic condition may also increases the likelihood of being inactive.

Most Reported Physical Activities of Nova Scotians

Walking for exercise is the most reported physical activity of Nova Scotians, followed by gardening or yard work. Fifty-nine percent of Nova Scotians report having done gardening or yard work in the last three months, and fifty percent of Nova Scotians have been smoking or yard work in the past three months. Other popular physical activities include swimming, bowling, and bicycling (15%), bowling (13%), and basketball (10%) (Figure 6).

Physical Activity and Smoking

The percentage of non-smokers who report being physically active or moderately active is significantly higher than that of smokers (50% and 40% respectively). This illustrates the correlation between poor health behaviors discussed in the previous section of this report. Health Canada warns that physical inactivity also has a detrimental effect on one’s health as is smoking.
Physical Activity and the CCHS

Physical Activity in Nova Scotia

Table 1 Percent of Physical Activity Levels—CCHS 1.1 vs. CCHS 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>CCHS 1.1 (%)</th>
<th>CCHS 2.1 (%)</th>
<th>Change (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>+14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>+9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity levels decline with age. Seventy-one percent of Nova Scotians aged 12 to 19 report being physically active or moderately active, which is up slightly from 67% in CCHS 1.1, among those aged 25 to 64, 61% report being physically active or moderately active, which is also up from 48% in CCHS 1.1. The rate of being physically active and moderately active declines to 41% for people aged 65 to 84 (unweighted rate) and, again, to 32 percent for those aged 85 or over (unweighted rate) (Figure 3). This trend is similar for both men and women.

The recent increase in physical activity among Nova Scotians who report their physical activity level to be inactive. Such specific conditions include arthritis, back problems, heart diseases, cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, and respiratory diseases. Activity levels and having a chronic condition may be “co-dependent variables.” Likewise inactivity increases the likelihood of developing chronic condition, having a chronic condition may also increases the likelihood of being inactive.

FIGURE 1 Physical Activity Levels, Nova Scotia (CCHS 2.1)

Table 2 Physical Activity Levels—CCHS 1.1 vs. CCHS 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income quintile</th>
<th>CCHS 1.1 (%)</th>
<th>CCHS 2.1 (%)</th>
<th>Change (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowest*</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>+3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower*</td>
<td>53.2*</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>+11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-Lower</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>+2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>+1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike in CCHS 1.1, the prevalence of being physically active was not found to be significantly different across various education levels in CCHS 2.1.

Why be Physically Active?

Daily physical activity is important to one’s health. Nova Scotians self-reported activity levels were positively associated with self-perceived health status (Figure 4). Among those who rate their health as excellent, 29 percent also report being physically active; while among those who consider their health status poor, only 17 percent do so. Those differences reflect respondents’ perceptions of their own health. To those that health status as poor, a significantly smaller percentage (8%) also report being physically active. This is because a poor self-perceived health status is not the only factor that likely influences people’s self-perceived health. Nova Scotians’ self-reported activity level significantly higher than that of smokers (50% and 41%, respectively). This illustrates the correlation between poor health behavior discussed in the previous section of this report. Health Canada warns that physical inactivity is as detrimental to one’s health as is smoking.
Physical Activity and the CCHS

Being physically active1 is defined in the CCHS as having an average daily energy expenditure of 2.0 kilocalories per kilogram of body weight (KKD). Health Canada reports that this is the level of energy required for cardiovascular health benefits. Someone who weighs 200 pounds would require about 30 minutes of brisk walking a day to maintain this level of energy expenditure. Moderate physical activity is defined as expending an average of between 1.5 and 2.9 kilocalories per kilogram of body weight per day. People who report activity levels leading to an average daily energy expenditure of less than 1.5 KKD (a level of activity too low to offer substantial health benefits) are considered to be physically inactive.

Energy expenditure in the CCHS is estimated from the responses given to a series of questions pertaining to the types of activities respondents participate in, as well as the lengths of time they spend engaged in these activities. The Physical Activity Index (PAI) separates ranges of energy expenditure into the aforementioned categories: active, moderately active, and inactive.

Who is Physically Active?

Twenty-five percent of Nova Scotians aged 12 and over report that they are regularly active, and only 25% meeting a minimum activity level, with the majority of the population (51%) being inactive (Figure 3). However, the situation around activity level among Nova Scotians has improved, with more people reporting being active, moderately active, and inactive.

Activity levels decline with age. Seventy-one percent of Nova Scotians aged 12 to 19 report being physically active or moderately active, which is up slightly from 67% in CCHS 1.1; among those aged 20 to 44, 51 percent report being physically active or moderately active, which is also up from 48% in CCHS 1.1. The rate of being physically active and moderately active declines to 40 percent for people aged 45 to 64 (Figure 3) and, again, to 32 percent for those aged 65 and over (up from 25% in CCHS 1.1) (Figure 2). This trend is similar for both men and women.

The prevalence of physical activity among Nova Scotians increases with income level (Figure 3). The percentage of those who are physically active or moderately active increases from 24% for those in the lowest income group to 31 percent for those in the highest income group. Nova Scotians in the highest income category are significantly more active than those in all other income categories. This may have significant implications for healthy public policy suggesting that public investment in physical activity infrastructure and opportunities may be needed to level the playing field for those who are economically disadvantaged allowing them to become more physically active.

Unlike in CCHS 1.1, the prevalence of being physically active was not found to be significantly different among various education levels in CCHS 2.1. Why be Physically Active?

Physical Activity and the CCHS

Physical Activity in Nova Scotia

Walking for exercise is the most reported physical activity of Nova Scotians, followed by gardening or yard work. Fifty-nine percent of Nova Scotians report walking for exercise in the past three months, and fifty percent of Nova Scotians report having done gardening or yard work in the past three months. Other popular physical activities include swimming (14%), gardening/yard work (13%), popular or social dance (12%), running (10%), weight training (9%), recreational bicycling (7%), bowling (7%), and basketball (6%)(Figure 6).

Most Reported Physical Activities of Nova Scotians

The percentage of non-smokers who report being physically active or moderately active is significantly higher than that of smokers (56% and 41% respectively). This illustrates the correlation between poor health behaviors discussed in the previous section of this report. Health Canada warns that physical inactivity is as detrimental to one’s health as is smoking.
Physical Activity in the DHAs

Although differences appear in levels of physical activity across DHAs, these differences are not statistically significant (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7  Physical Activity in the DHAs, Nova Scotia (CCHS 2.1)

Note
1. Definitions of physical activity used in the CCHS are consistent with those used in the National Population Health Survey (NPHS), also conducted by Statistics Canada.

Additional Resources
This document was prepared by the Information Analysis and Reporting, Information Management Branch of the Nova Scotia Department of Health. For additional information on the data included in this report, please contact us at (902) 424-8291.

Copies of this report are available on line at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/reports.htm> Click on "Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)" for copies of this and other reports in the series.