

## 22-year study finds adults aren't active enough

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A new study has sounded the alarm that the majority of Canadian adults are inactive over their lifespan and don't exercise enough during their leisure time. Published in the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, the study is unique in that it collected information over two decades from the 1981 Canada Fitness Survey, the 1988 Campbell's Survey of Well-Being and from the 2002/4 Physical Activity Longitudinal Study of the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.

The research team studied a healthy subgroup of Canadians and found almost 56 percent were consistently inactive and only 12 percent of participants remained active with each subsequent survey. The investigation was a partnership between the Université de Montréal, the Sainte-Justine Hospital Research Center, the Centre Hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal, the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute and the Pennington Biomedical Research Center.

"Women and older participants, compared to men or their younger peers, were less likely to follow a consistently active lifestyle. And participants with less education and lower household income were also less likely to be active," says lead author Tracie A. Barnett, a professor at the Université de Montréal's Department of Social and Preventive Medicine and a researcher at the Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center.

The research team followed 884 adults, initially aged 18 to 60 years old,

who lived in large cities, suburban, and rural areas. Among participants active at the beginning of the study, those disadvantaged in education and income were more likely to decrease their levels of physical activity over time, compared to participants who were university educated and with a higher family income.

However, there was some good news. The researchers found that 25 percent of Canadians increased their levels of physical activity over time - an improvement that was observed in all socio-economic sub-groups.

The research group recommends continued efforts to increase physical activity among the overall population, as well as targeted programs that can encourage more vulnerable groups to keep moving. What's more, the scientists stressed that health promotion programs must ensure that health inequalities experienced by socially disadvantaged groups do not worsen.

"There is a need for continued and targeted health promotion efforts, ideally during childhood and adolescence but also in adulthood, to ensure that Canadians remain physically active across the lifespan," says Dr. Lise Gauvin of the Centre de Recherche du Centre Hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal and the Centre de Recherche Léa-Roback sur les Inégalités Sociales de Santé de Montréal. "Because so few adults reverse behaviours acquired in early adulthood and because many active youths become sedentary adults, programs must target the entire population."

More information: "Distinct trajectories of leisure time physical activity and predictors of trajectory class membership: a 22 year cohort study," published in the *International Journal of Behavioral [Nutrition](#) and [Physical Activity](#)* was authored by Tracie A. Barnett of the Université de Montréal and the Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center, Lise Gauvin of the Centre de Recherche du Centre Hospitalier de

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