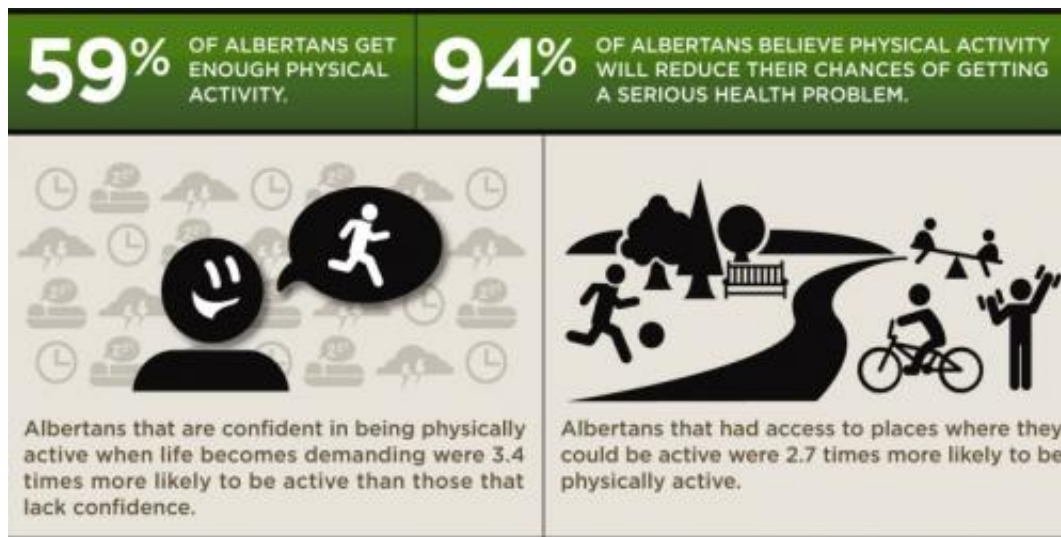


Albertans getting more active, but still room to move

January 10 2013



The 2013 Alberta Survey on Physical Activity offers insights into Albertans' physical activity levels and recommendations for helping more people get active. Credit: Alberta Centre for Active Living

More Albertans may be benefiting from physical activity, but there's still plenty of room for people to get moving, according to a new survey.

Results from the [2013 Alberta Survey on Physical Activity](#), published Jan. 9 by the U of A's [Alberta Centre for Active Living](#), show that 59 per cent of adult Albertans are physically active enough to receive [health benefits](#), up from 54.5 per cent in 2011.

"Although the increase in activity since 2011 is not statistically significant on its own, the upward trend from 2011 to 2013 is positive," said Christina Loitz, a co-author of the survey and knowledge [translation](#) specialist at the Alberta Centre for Active Living. The centre has conducted the survey every other year since 1995 to monitor the [physical activity](#) levels of Albertans.

Moving from awareness to activity

Loitz noted that despite the small increase over the last two years, more than 40 per cent of Albertans are not active enough to gain health benefits. Part of the value of an ongoing survey is helping researchers understand why this is the case. "The survey provides insights into sociodemographic, psychological and [environmental factors](#) that may affect the activity levels of Albertans," she said.

For instance, the 2013 survey shows that Albertans with lower household incomes are less physically active. It also shows that Albertans are less active as they get older; 87 per cent of those aged 18 to 24 are active, whereas only 35 per cent of those over 65 are active.

On the positive side, the survey showed that Albertans are well aware that physical activity has health benefits—89 per cent agree that physical activity improves their health and prevents many [chronic diseases](#), and 94 per cent agree that physical activity will keep them healthy.

Walking is one of the most popular activities, with 74 per cent of Albertans taking to their feet for leisure, transportation or work.

"Although walking is popular, Albertans generally do not walk enough to attain a moderate level of physical activity," said Loitz. "[Adults](#) need to be physically active at least 150 minutes a week to get health benefits, including light to vigorous activity every day."

Recommendations for active living

"The challenge to those of us working to increase physical activity is to create environments that support and encourage all Albertans to be more active, so that they will gain health and other benefits," said Judith Down, director of the Alberta Centre for Active Living.

The [concise report](#) from the [survey](#) offers several recommendations to boost Albertans' [physical activity levels](#), in three areas:

- physical activity at work
- encouraging older adults to be [physically active](#)
- strategies to increase walking time by Albertans of all ages

"We added recommendations to the 2013 report to help practitioners, policy- and decision-makers, and individuals strategize about ways to boost physical activity," noted Loitz.

Here are some of the report's recommendations for employees:

- Create a habit; consistently do 10 to 60 minutes of physical activity before work, at lunch or during breaks.
- Make physical activity a priority; block off time in your schedule to be active.
- Bike, walk or wheel to work.
- If you use public transit, get off a few stops early and walk the rest of the way, to work or home.
- If you drive to work, park a kilometre away and enjoy the walking time.
- Sign up for physical activity programs and initiatives offered at your workplace.

- Use your health and wellness spending account; for example, find out whether it covers fitness centre memberships or sports team fees.
- Start a workplace walking group.

More information: www.centre4activeliving.ca/pub ... 013/info-graphic.jpg

Provided by University of Alberta

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