

Less than half of Canadians exercise to relieve stress

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A research study out of McMaster University has found that only 40 per cent of Canadians exercise to cope with stress.

The researchers analyzed data from Statistics Canada's Canadian Community Health Survey of nearly 40,000 Canadians 15 and older. Of 13 coping behaviours or strategies polled, exercise was ranked eighth, meaning people were more likely to cope with [stress](#) by problem-solving; looking on the bright side, trying to relax, talking to others, blaming oneself, ignoring stress or praying, rather than being active.

"We know stress levels are high among Canadians, and that exercise is effective at managing stress and improving health and well-being, so the fact exercise is number eight and that less than half of the population use it is worrisome," said principal investigator John Cairney, a professor of family medicine, and psychiatry and behavioural neurosciences, at McMaster's Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine.

The study, published in the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, also found that younger, single, more educated and more active adults as well as women were more likely to use exercise for stress release. As well, the individuals who reported using exercise to combat stress were more likely to endorse other positive coping strategies and less likely to use alcohol or drugs for coping.

Encouraging exercise, especially in groups identified as being less likely to use [exercise](#) to cope with stress, could potentially reduce overall [stress](#)

[levels](#) and improve general health and well-being, said Cairney.

"Exercise as a coping strategy for stress can be a 'win-win' situation because there are both mental and physical [health](#) benefits."

Provided by McMaster University

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