

Heart and Stroke Foundation TIME CRUNCH REPORT 2011

How Canadians in Different Regions See Barriers to Healthy Living

Physical Activity - Regional Comparisons

| | Canada | Atlantic Provinces | Que. | Ont. | Prairie Provinces | B.C. |
|---|--------|--------------------|------|------|-------------------|------|
| I am physically active all or most of the time (may include work, leisure and/or commuting) * | 43% | 42% | 42% | 45% | 40% | 45% |
| I am physically inactive * | 24% | 26% | 30% | 22% | 23% | 18% |
| Barriers prevent me from being as active as I would like * | 76% | 78% | 66% | 81% | 78% | 75% |
| Time I would like to spend being physically active is spent commuting * | 31% | 33% | 33% | 34% | 24% | 26% |
| I lack time due to work, family and other obligations * | 44% | 48% | 39% | 49% | 43% | 37% |
| I lack motivation to be physically active or to live a healthier lifestyle* | 52% | 49% | 53% | 53% | 52% | 49% |
| I watch television 15 or more hrs/week (aged 20+) ^T | 29% | 31% | 31% | 29% | 29% | 27% |
| I use a computer 11 or more hrs/week (aged 20+) ^{TT} | 15% | 13% | 12% | 16% | 13% | 18% |

* HSFC survey

^T Percentage viewing television 15 or more hours per week, by province/territory and health region, household population aged 20 years or older, Canada, 2007 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2008002/article/10600/t/5202431-eng.htm>;

^{TT} Percentage using computers for 11 or more hours per week, by province/territory and health region, household population aged 20 years or older, Canada, 2007 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2008002/article/10600/t/5202432-eng.htm>

The new survey¹ of more than 2,000 Canadian adults by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada (HSFC) uncovered some significant regional variations in how Canadians approach the challenges of healthy, active living.

Quebec, which according to Statistics Canada is the province with the lowest proportion of people who are physically active (49%) in their leisure time, had the lowest proportion of adults saying there were barriers to being active (66%, compared to the national average of 76%).

Ontarians, on the other hand, were the most likely to blame barriers for their inactivity (81%). Is it because Ontarians are work-obsessed and caught in long commutes? If so, they are not alone. The percentage of Canadians blaming their inactivity on long work days was similar in Ontario, Atlantic Canada and the prairie provinces; as well, the proportions in Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces who said the problem was commute times were also similar.

Part of the problem may lie in lack of access to recreational facilities and programs. Previous research by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute suggests that only about a third of those in the Atlantic and Prairie provinces have many physical activity facilities and programs in their communities. The numbers are somewhat higher in Quebec, Ontario and B.C.

However, the presence of facilities and programs is only the first step; people have to have the ability and motivation to take advantage of them. And motivation appears to be an important issue: across all provinces, roughly half of survey respondents admitted they lacked the motivation to be active.

Even in British Columbia -- the province that, according to Statistics Canada, has the highest rate of leisure time physical activity in the country (59%) -- one adult in two (49%) admitted they lack the motivation to be active.

¹ Online survey of 2,160 Canadians 18 years or older conducted by Environics Research Group in October 2011.

Healthy Eating - Regional Comparisons*

| | Canada | Atlantic Provinces | Que. | Ont. | Prairie Provinces | B.C. |
|---|---------------|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| I eat 5+ servings fruit/veg per day all or most of time | 51% | 40% | 56% | 49% | 47% | 57% |
| I rarely or never eat 5+ servings fruit/veg per day | 18% | 23% | 13% | 22% | 15% | 12% |
| There are barriers that prevent me from eating healthy | 57% | 67% | 42% | 63% | 62% | 54% |
| Healthy meals take too long to prepare | 41% | 41% | 37% | 46% | 40% | 36% |
| I can't afford to eat 5+ servings fruit/veg per day | 47% | 64% | 39% | 50% | 47% | 43% |
| Too many fast food outlets in my community lack healthy options | 51% | 59% | 38% | 57% | 56% | 51% |
| Food service outlets don't have enough fruit and vegetable options | 70% | 72% | 64% | 74% | 71% | 70% |

HSFC survey*

In the HSFC poll, 51% of Canadian adults said they eat five or more servings of fruit and vegetables a day all or most of the time, a rate that is higher than the 44% reported in the 2009/2010 Canadian Community Health Survey.

Overall, six out of 10 Canadians agreed that there were barriers preventing them from eating a healthy diet, with the most common (cited by 70%) being that food service outlets have inadequate fruit and vegetable options.

However, there was significant variance across the country.

Quebecers were not only less likely to see barriers (42%, compared to the national average of 57%), but only about 38% blamed their unhealthy eating on time, cost or fast-food outlets. In contrast, the cost of fruit and vegetables are seen as barriers by more than 60% of adults in Atlantic Canada and about 50% in Ontario and the Prairie Provinces. And this may be only the tip of the iceberg. According to a shopping survey conducted by the Heart and Stroke Foundation in 2009, the cost of fruit and vegetables is even higher in rural and remote communities, such as in Northern Canada.

The lack of healthy options in fast-food outlets was cited by approximately 60% of those in Atlantic Canada, Ontario and the Prairie Provinces and 50% of those in BC. Forty per cent of people in Atlantic Canada, Ontario and the Prairie Provinces had the idea that healthy meals take too long to prepare.