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Special points of interest:

- Most youth are physically active throughout the week.
- Most youth are watching only 2 hours of TV on school days.
- About 12% of youth used protein supplements or creatine in past year.
- Males are more physically active, participate on more sports teams and are more likely to use sports supplements.

Physical Activity

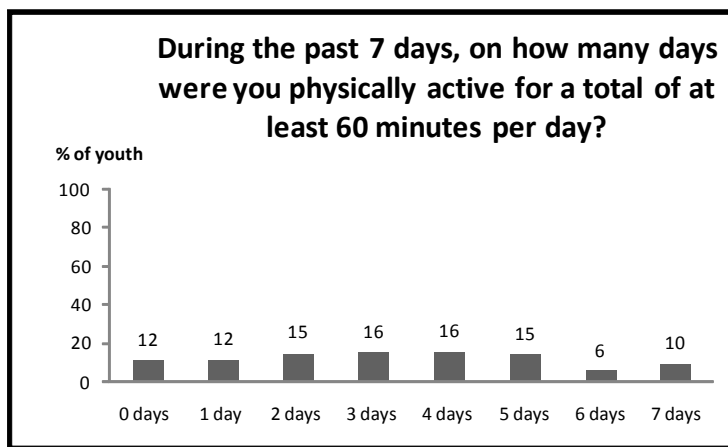
Physical activity is essential to children’s healthy growth and development. Regular physical activity improves cardiovascular fitness and helps develop strength, flexibility, and bone density; helps young people maintain a healthy body weight and improves cognitive performance. It promotes their self-esteem and creates a greater sense of well-being and healthier eating habits (Health Canada 1999; CCSD 2006). Over the long term, physical activity reduces the risk of chronic disease (Health Canada 1999)

Over the past decade, rates of participation in *regular* physical activity increased slightly from 75% in 1994/95 to 78% in 2002/03 among youth aged 12 to 14 and from 67% to 76%

among teens (15 to 19 years). Boys are still more likely than girls to report they participated in regular physical activity in 2002/3 (CCSD 2006), although girl’s activity levels appear to be increasing (Health Canada 1999).

In this study of rural youth, 86% of youth participated in some form of moderate physical activity on at least one day in the past week. Male youth were more active than female youth on a number of measures. Male youth reported doing more vigorous activity, more days of the week and played on more sports teams than females. Male youth were also more likely to take supplements or other substances to enhance performance.

Only 10% of youth getting at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day.



Canada’s Physical Activity Guide recommends getting at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. According to the survey, youth are showing moderate levels of physical activity. Overall, 88% of youth were physically

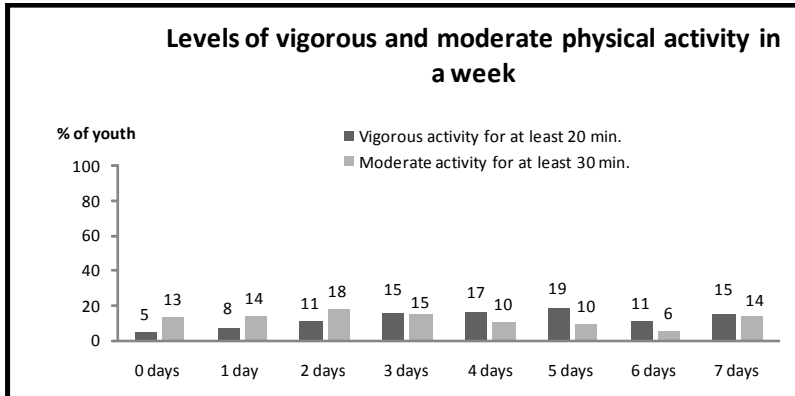
active for at least one hour, on at least one day of the last week. Almost 10% of youth were active for one hour of every day in the last week, but most were physically active for at least 60 minutes on 2-4 days of the week.

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Vigorous and moderate physical activity

“...the majority of guys it’s just a natural thing for them to enjoy moving around and competition. And then girls they often don’t want to do the competition part, it’s just for fun. So here, what do we have for girls to do that isn’t competition. There’s nothing, there is no physical activity that you can take that’s not competition. We used to have dance here and you could choose if you wanted to go to dance competitions or whatever which was good but now we don’t even have that for older girls here, you have to go to a different town. And like we don’t have anything else, it’s all competitive sports.” - Youth Focus Group Participant



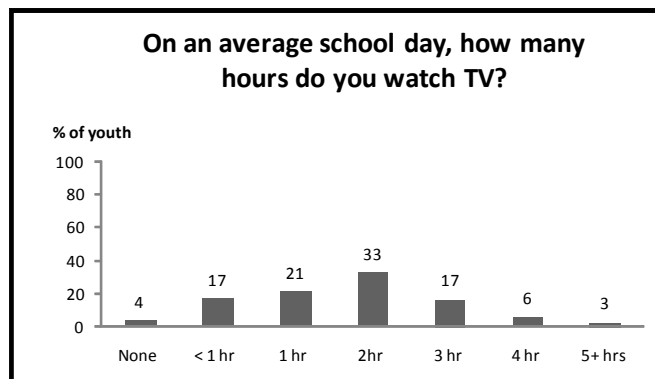
Youth were asked to indicate the amount of vigorous and moderate physical activity they had been involved in over the previous week. Most youth in the study have at least some physical

activity. Over 19% of youth participated in vigorous physical activity on five days the week before the survey. Close to 15% of youth took part in vigorous physical activity every day of the

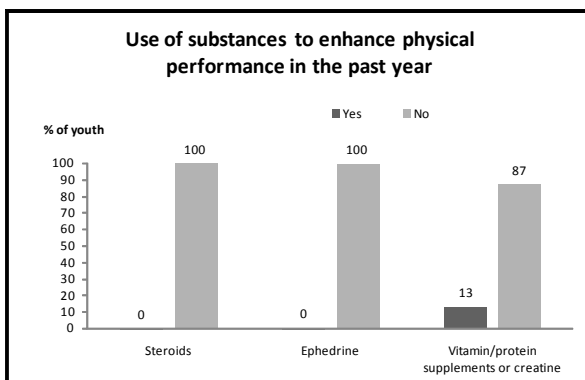
past seven days. There were no differences between the different age groups in the amount of activity. As for moderate physical activity, 86% of youth participated in some form of moderate physical activity on at least one day in the past week. Generally youth responses were evenly distributed between one day and all days of the week. There were no strong relationships between a youth’s age and the amount of moderate physical activity they had in the last week.

Most youth watch TV 2 hrs or less on school days

It is encouraging that on school days most youth in the study are not watching a lot of television. Most youth (53.7%) watch between one and two hours of TV on a given school day. Only 4% report watching no television and 2.6% watch five or more hours of TV on a school day. There was no trend regarding the age of youth in the study and the amount of television they would watch on a school day.



Protein supplements and Creatine most common supplements used to enhance physical performance



For youth in the survey, vitamin/protein supplements or creatine are by far the most commonly used supplements to enhance physical performance. Less than one percent of youth used either steroid pills or shots or ephedrine to enhance their physical performance. Overall there was no difference between youth of different ages and their likelihood to use physical enhancers.

Male youth more physically active than female youth

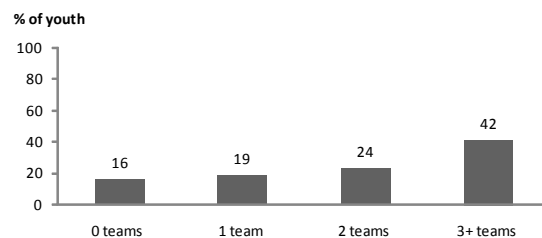
“I don’t know, I think about the physical activity, that males are more likely to take part in physical activities and what not, I think it’s probably because of the football team and all that cause it’s a big team and for girls it’s just mostly like golf and volleyball.”
- Youth Focus Group Participant

Many differences were found between male and female youth in the study regarding their physical activity habits, including the following:

- Males engaged in vigorous physical activity significantly more often than females. Six percent of females compared to 2.5% of males participated in no vigorous physical activity over the last seven days. In contrast 19% of males and 11% of females participated in vigorous physical activity on all seven days of the last week.
- Overall, females participated in more moderate physical activity than males.
- Males were more likely to be physically active for at least an hour, on more days of the week, than females. For example, 14.6% of females were not physically active for at least 60 minutes over the last week, compared to 7.8% of males. In addition, 13.4% of males were physically active for at least an hour every day of the week, compared to 6.6% of females.
- In general, male youth spent more minutes actually engaged in physical activity, during physical education classes than females.
- More males participated on 2 or more sports teams compared to females (69.4% and 61.5% respectively).
- Double the percentage of males (18.5%) reported using supplements to enhance their physical activity over the past year than females (9.0%).
- In this survey, the youth that reported using ephedrine to enhance their physical performance in the past year were male.
- For males, the number of hours spent watching TV was related negatively to their participation on sports teams.

42% of youth are on 3 or more sports teams

During the last 12 months, on how many sports teams did you play?



A large number of youth in the survey participated on sports teams over the last year. Most youth (41.5%) were involved with three or more sports teams. A larger number of older youth tended to participate on fewer sports teams than younger youth. Only 8.3% of youth 12 years or younger did not participate on sports teams, compared to 25.9% of youth 17 years and older.

“Personally I am not a physically active person. I do enough walking as a waitress I think so I don’t go out of my way to do anything else, but that’s just me.”- Youth Focus Group Participant

Physical activity not related to depression or substance use

Although key informants in this study linked participation in sports with lower levels of substance use, when we controlled for age and sex, the relationships did not hold up with the rural youth in this study.

Comparisons were made be-

tween the levels of physical activity that youth reported and levels of alcohol, marijuana and cigarette use in the last month. There were no strong relationships between physical activity and substance use when controlled for age and sex.

When youth responses to levels of physical activity are compared to their responses to having sad feelings and thoughts of suicide, after controlling for age and sex, in general there were no strong differences between physical activity and depression.

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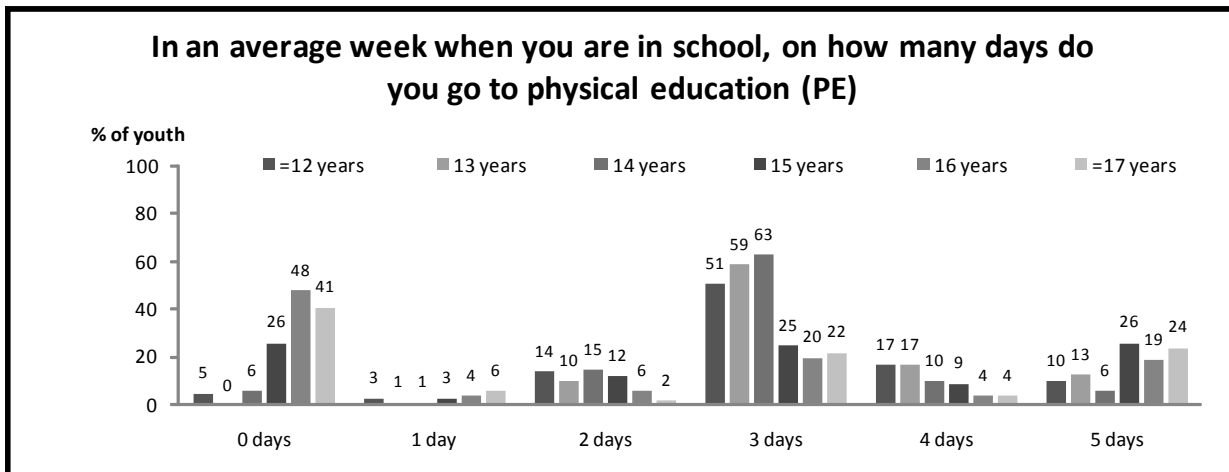
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Large variability in physical education classes among students



Youth of different ages report quite different experiences on this question. Most youths between 12 and 14 years attended physical education classes three days in an average week or more.

Differences in school curriculums are evident as 26% of

the 15 year olds reported having PE on 0 days per week, 25% reported 3 days per week and 26% reported 5 days a week. Looking at the 16 and 17 year olds, almost half have no PE in the week while another large group has PE either 3 days a week or 5 days a week.

In addition, there is a significant difference between the various age groups with respect to the number of minutes spent actually doing physical activity in an average PE class. Generally it was found that younger youths reported longer PE classes

(40+ minutes of physical activity in PE class), but older youths generally had fewer minutes of physical activity in PE class (40 minutes or less).