

Physical Activity in 2004

Summary Report No 2 2005

- **The 2004 Physical Activity survey estimated that 53.9% of adults were sufficiently physically active to benefit their health.**
- **Respondents who undertook sufficient physical activity were more likely to be younger, male, and have a higher level of education.**
- **The most common type of leisure time activity was walking, with 74.2% of adults participating.**

Introduction

In 2004, the South Australian Physical Activity survey asked a sample of 2999 adults about the physical activity they had undertaken in the past week. The types of physical activity reported here are: walking, vigorous physical activity (for example jogging, cycling and organised sports), and other more moderate activities (such as golf, gentle swimming or lawn bowls). The results provide a picture of leisure time physical activities people undertake in a week.

It is important to determine the characteristics of those undertaking physical activity in order to assist in targeting of physical activity strategies to those who are not sufficiently active.

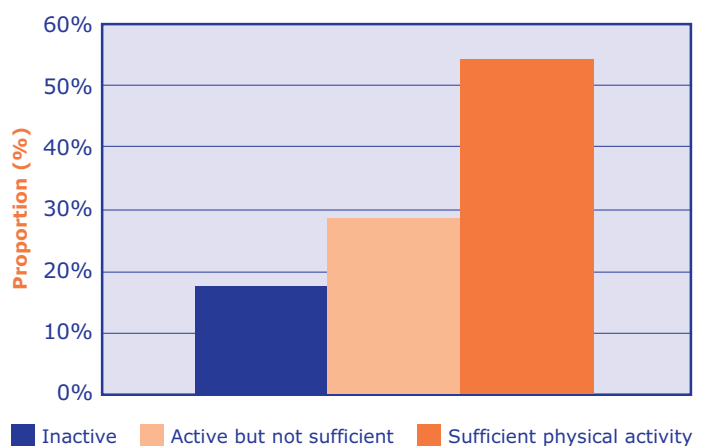
Sufficient physical activity

The amount of time people undertake walking, moderate or vigorous activity can be summed to determine whether a sufficient level of physical activity has been achieved in order to provide a health benefit.

There are two definitions, the first definition involves achieving a minimum level of 150 minutes of walking or moderate or vigorous activity in the past week (with time spent doing vigorous activity doubled in order to account for its greater intensity) and the second definition specifying that this activity be undertaken in a minimum of five sessions.

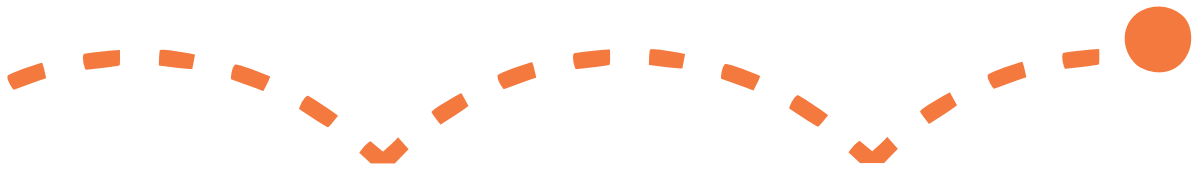
Using Definition 1, that is ignoring how many sessions of activity, the survey found that 53.9% of adults were sufficiently physically active to achieve a health benefit (Figure 1). There were 28.9% of adults who were active but not sufficiently, and the remaining 17.2% are classified as inactive.

Figure 1: Prevalence of physical activity, using Definition 1



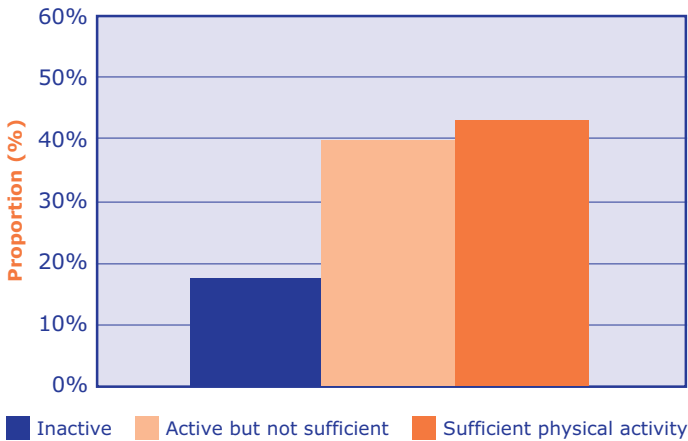
Those who undertook sufficient physical activity according to Definition 1 (53.9%) were more likely to:

- Be male;
- Be aged 18 to 29 years;
- Live in a household of three or more adults;
- Be born in Australia;
- Speak English at home;
- Have never married;
- Be employed, either full or part time;
- Have education at degree or higher;
- Earn over \$60,000 pa;
- Report their health as excellent/very good/good;
- Be a non-smoker; and
- Be in the normal range for weight (BMI).



Using Definition 2, including a minimum of five sessions of activity, the survey found that 42.9% of adults were sufficiently physically active to achieve a health benefit (Figure 2). There were 39.9% of adults who were active but not sufficiently, and the remaining 17.2% are classified as inactive.

Figure 2: Prevalence of physical activity, using Definition 2



Those who undertook sufficient physical activity according to Definition 2 (42.9%) were more likely to:

- Be aged 18 to 29 years;
- Live in a household of three or more adults;
- Be born in Australia;
- Have never married;
- Be employed full time;
- Have education at degree or higher;
- Earn over \$60,000 pa;
- Report their health as excellent/very good/good;
- Be a non-smoker; and
- Be in the normal range for weight (BMI).

Characteristics of each activity

Overall 82.8% of respondents undertook at least one of walking, vigorous, or moderate activities.

Walking

In 2004, 74.2% of respondents had walked for at least 10 minutes for recreation, exercise or to get to or from places. People who walked were more likely to:

- Be female;
- Speak English at home;
- Be employed part time;
- Have education at degree or higher;
- Earn over \$40,000 pa; and
- Report their health as excellent/very good/good.

Vigorous activity

In 2004, 36.9% of respondents undertook vigorous physical activity. These respondents were more likely to:

- Be male;
- Be aged 18 to 44 years;
- Live in a household of three or more adults;
- Have children in the household;
- Be born in Australia;
- Speak English at home;
- Have never married;
- Be employed, either full or part time;
- Have education at degree or higher;
- Earn over \$60,000 pa;
- Report their health as excellent/very good/good; and
- Be in the normal range for weight (BMI).

Other moderate activity

In 2004, 17.5% of respondents undertook other moderate level physical activity. These respondents were more likely to:

- Be male;
- Be aged 18 to 29 years;
- Have no children in the household;
- Have never married;
- Have education at degree or higher; and
- Report their health as excellent/very good/good.

Conclusion

Currently only about half of the South Australian population achieve a sufficient level of physical activity to gain a health benefit, and it is important to understand who is undertaking activity so that appropriate interventions can be developed. Regular physical activity is an important part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and reducing the risk of obesity and serious illnesses.

The results are being used to inform South Australian policy directions related to physical activity. Further information, the full report and questionnaire are available at www.beactive.com.au



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