

# AN OVERVIEW OF NEW BRUNSWICK YOUTH'S PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



In 2016, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiologists (CSEP-SCPE) launched the first movement guidelines for 24 hours aimed at children and youth between the ages of 5 and 17. An overview of [the 2018 report card on physical activity for children and youth of ParticipACTION](#) showed 62% of 3 to 4-year old's and only 35% of 5 to 17-year olds were reaching their recommended physical activity levels as outlined in the Canadian 24-hr Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth. It was also noted that 21% of children typically used an active mode of transportation for commuting.

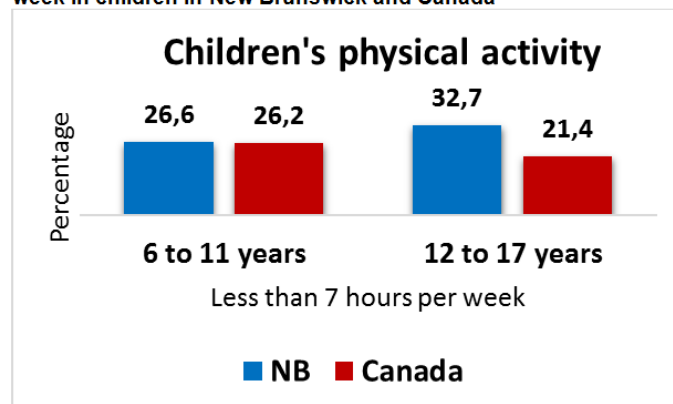
The Canadian 24-hour movement guidelines for children and youth (1), state that children should adopt an active lifestyle with a focus on finding balance between physical activity, sedentary behaviours and sleep in order to ensure their healthy development. Here is a profile of the youth from New Brunswick with regards to each of these activities, based on the provincial and national data that are currently available.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

Youth between the ages of 5 and 17 should accumulate at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day, including a variety of aerobic activities. In addition, high intensity activities and activities that rely on muscular strength should be performed at least three times per week (1). These recommendations stipulate that youth should be performing at least 7 hours of activity per week. In New Brunswick, 26.6% (26.2% in Canada) of youth

aged between 6 and 11 and 32.7% (21.4% in Canada) of youth aged between 12 and 17 (Figure 1) do not meet these recommendations, based on data retrieved from Statistics Canada in 2015 (2).

Figure 1: Participation in physical activities less than 7 hours per week in children in New Brunswick and Canada



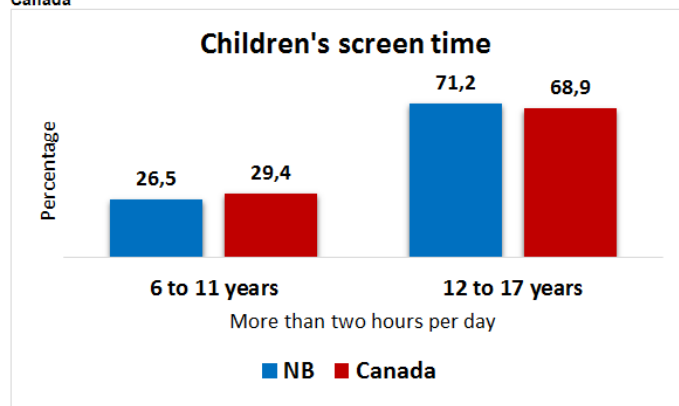
Other data are also available for physical activity guidelines for youth in New Brunswick. First of all, if we look at a questionnaire on the well-being of New Brunswick primary school aged students, specifically kindergarten to grade five students in 2016-2017 (3), 77% of the respondents in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades reported not achieving at least one hour per day of physical activity. However, the parents for this same age group reported that only 21% of the children aged 5 to 11 (kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> grade) did not meet the minimum recommendations. What's more, 11% of students in this group practice active transportation methods to get to school. For the older students, those in grade 6 to grade 12, it is 78% who report not meeting the minimum recommendations for physical activity. Regarding active transportation methods, it is only 7% of these students that regularly travel to and

from school this way. There are a slightly higher percentage who practice regularly a mix of active and inactive methods of transportation.

The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (5) used pedometers to measure the number of steps taken in a day in order to examine the physical activity levels of youth. They report that for children between ages 5 and 19 years on average stepped 10 400 steps per day, which is slightly less than the national average of 11 300 steps per day. In comparison to the other provinces and territories, New Brunswick ranks just ahead of Newfoundland and Labrador for average steps taken in a day, with an overall rank of 12<sup>th</sup> place. In general, youth from the Atlantic provinces perform fewer daily steps than the average Canadian youth. New Brunswick shows the same tendency as across Canada with boys performing on average more daily steps than girls. Also, as it is across Canada, youth who move more generally come from households with higher revenues and are involved in more organised sporting activities. Finally, this study indicates that the number of steps taken daily decreases with age, and this for both New Brunswick as well as the Canadian average.

## SCREEN TIME

Figure 2: Children screen time more than two hours per day in New Brunswick and Canada



Screen time (watching television, gaming, using a computer, a tablet or any portable electronic device) should be limited to a maximum of 2 hours per day between the ages of 6 and 17. Also, prolonged sitting

should also be limited (1). Continuing with New Brunswick, 26.5% (29.4% in Canada) of children aged between 6 and 11 and 71.2% (68.9% in Canada) aged between 12 and 17 (Figure 2) do not meet these recommendations (6). Based on the questionnaire on the well-being of New Brunswick primary school aged students, it is 57% of the respondents between ages 5 and 11 who spend more than 2 hours per day in front of a screen (3). For those aged 12 to 17, 63% of the respondents spend more than 2 hours per day (4).

## SLEEP

Children between ages 5 and 13 are recommended to sleep between 9 to 11 hours per night, youth aged 14 to 17 should sleep between 8 to 10 hours per night. In New Brunswick, it is approximately 6 youth in 10 who sleep less than 8 hours per night (7). Continuing with data from the questionnaire on the well-being of New Brunswick primary school aged students (3,4), 39% of students between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> grade sleep less than 8 hours per night. Data are not available for students between kindergarten and 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

This is alarming data, and if we look further, we can find what influences kids to adopt a sedentary lifestyle. Let's look at a non-exhaustive list of determinants of change that bring a decrease in sedentariness for kids:

- A decrease in the number of screens in the household (8)
- A decrease in sedentary parents' behaviour (8)
- Reducing parents' weekend screen-time (9)
- Increasing family participation in sports or recreation (observed in boys) (9)
- Promoting freedom to play outside (observed in girls) (9)

For active transportation, the distance between the home and school was one of the most important determinants of a child's active transport to school. However, even if the kids live in proximity of their school, not all of them would use active transport to commute to school. A determinant that was more associated with children's active transport was their

parents' use of active transport. “Monkey see, monkey do.” Furthermore, parents that had safety concerns about their neighbourhood had less active children which included active transportation (10).

Move in family, promoting free outside play, and reducing screen-time for children and parents is one part of the equation in reducing children sedentarity. However, they are concrete solutions that can be rapidly implemented within the family.

*The surveys of the well-being of New Brunswick youth contain many other data on different dimensions of well-being, including nutrition, mental health, leisure activities, and others. You can consult these reports, and others, on the New Brunswick Health Council website (<https://www.nbhc.ca>)*

## REFERENCES

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10. Henne HM et al., Parental factors in children's active transport to school, Public Health, 2014

## **ABOUT THE NEW BRUNSWICK KINESIOLOGY ASSOCIATION**

The AKNB is a non-profit organization whose mandate is to promote the profession of Kinesiology in New Brunswick. Our mission is to :

- To provide leadership in promoting the profession of Kinesiology and Human Kinetics;
- Stimulate the evolution of the profession of Kinesiology through the development of continuing education for its members;
- To foster partnerships with the academic community by supporting research and development of the Kinesiology program;
- Reinforce the benefits of membership to its members.

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