



Physical Health Is Influenced by Different Social Circumstances

What is this research about?

Healthy communities can be built through increasing the amount of physical activity by members. But everyone does not have the equal opportunity to be active. Different social factors affect physical activity. These include: age, language, gender, income, status and space. Health and physical activity are affected by these social determinants. This affects spaces like the workplace, education, support services, and cultural environments.

What did the researchers do?

The researcher worked in collaboration with different community partners in both the private and public sector. They focused on the City of Toronto. The researchers measured self reported activity levels for both youth and adults. With these results, indicators were used to measure levels of physical activity. Barriers to and facilitators of healthy activity were also named. Finally, the group partnered with York University to hold three focus groups. They looked at how women and girls felt about physical activity. One focus group involved women who were newcomers, while the other two involved young girls from age 13-17.

What you need to know:

Newcomers and other groups experience barriers from being active in sports and physical activity. This is a result of institutional racism. Many spaces do not address the varied and distinct needs of different groups, despite multiculturalism policies in Canada.

What did the researchers find?

The group found that both youth and adults did not meet the recommended levels of physical activity. Only 7% of youth ages 6 to 19 met Canadian guidelines of 60 minutes of activity a day, and only 15% of adults did as well. For both groups, women and girls both reported lower levels of physical.

A number of social circumstances might affect physical activity by youth. Schools found it difficult to integrate opportunities for physical activity, with a lack of a space, time, and resources. Even though the number of sport teams at school increased, less than 10% of these teams were co-ed. Students whose parents were born outside of Canada were less likely to participate in school teams and intramural sports. Also, those with at least one

parent working in the professional management sector were more likely to be a part of these same activities.

There were also insights on the physical activity of adults. There was a decrease of registrants for city-run recreation programs by 30%. Cycling increased among adults in the city. However, it was more accessible for those who earned stable incomes and were well educated. There was low physical activity in neighbourhoods with little to no access to parks and recreational space. People with a physical disability also shared their concerns. Service improvements were needed with regards to the barriers faced by those with a disability to be physically active. Immigrants also faced barriers, like language, financial costs, and social exclusion.

The focus groups shared some insight on why self reported levels of physical activity were lower for women than for men. Women who were newcomers mentioned problems with time, cost and the lack of family activity programs. This would encourage them to be physically active with their families. Girls and young women noted that they might feel more comfortable being physically active in separation from boys and young men.

How can you use this research?

This research could be used to shed insight on various service needs of different communities. It would also be useful for new approaches in health policy. Finally, community work in both the public and private sector could also include this research as a part of their goals.

About the Researcher

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