Insufficient physical activity

Citation
AIHW

Participating in regular physical activity provides many benefits for physical and mental health at all ages, and can also help manage biomedical risk factors such as high body weight, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Insufficient physical activity is a key risk factor contributing to disease burden in Australia. Given it plays a role in chronic conditions, it is important for Australians to achieve the levels of activity outlined in Australia’s Physical Activity and Sedentary behaviour guidelines.

Findings from this report:
- 15% of adults met both the physical activity and muscle strengthening activity guidelines in 2017–18
- 17% of 2–5 year olds met the physical activity and screen-based behaviour guidelines on 7 days in 2011–12
- 12% of children and 2% of adolescents met the physical activity and screen-based behaviour guidelines in 2011–12
- 1 in 2 adults (55%) did not meet the physical activity guidelines in 2017–18

Cat. no: PHE 248
Insufficient physical activity

What is physical activity?

‘Physical activity’ is any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure (WHO 2017a). Examples of ‘physical activity’ include:

Sporting and leisure activities

- swimming
- tennis
- bushwalking
- going to the gym.

Incidental activities

- at work
- for transport
- household chores.

Muscle strengthening activities

- some types of yoga or pilates
- resistance-band training
- high-intensity activities (for example, cycling, dancing, gymnastics or gardening that requires digging or lifting)
- climbing stairs or hills
- squats, push-ups, sit-ups and weight training
- active playgrounds for children (for example, monkey bars, climbing frames, skipping or hopscotch).

Insufficient physical activity

Low levels of physical activity are a major risk factor for chronic conditions. People who do not do sufficient physical activity have a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis. Being physically active improves mental and musculoskeletal health and reduces other risk factors such as overweight and obesity, high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol.

In 2015, 2.5% of the total disease burden was due to physical inactivity (AIHW 2019). Physical inactivity contributed 10–20% of the individual disease burden from diabetes, bowel cancer, uterine cancer, dementia, breast cancer, coronary heart disease and stroke (AIHW 2019) (see Burden of disease).

See more information on Physical activity.

Box 1: Australia’s Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines

Australia’s Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines (the Guidelines) are a set of recommendations outlining the minimum levels of physical activity required for health benefits, as well as the maximum amount of time one should spend on sedentary behaviours to achieve optimal health outcomes (Department of Health 2017).

There are different recommendations for each age group, summarised in the table below. This approach acknowledges that different amounts of physical activity are required at various stages of life for maximum health benefits (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical activity</th>
<th>Ages 2-5</th>
<th>Ages 5-17</th>
<th>Ages 18-64</th>
<th>Ages 65 and over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least 180 minutes per day with at least 60 minutes of energetic play</td>
<td>Several hours of light activities with at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day</td>
<td>Be active on most, preferably all days with at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per week</td>
<td>Be active on most, preferably all days with at least 30 minutes of moderate activity per day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sedentary or screen-based activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should not be restrained for more than 60 minutes at a time</th>
<th>No more than 120 minutes of screen use</th>
<th>Minimise and break up prolonged periods of sitting</th>
<th>Be as active as possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Strength

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Vigorous and muscle strengthening activities 3 times a week</th>
<th>Muscle strengthening activities 2 times a week</th>
<th>Incorporate muscle strengthening activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Notes:

1. This group includes those aged 5 who are not yet in full-time schooling (for example, pre-schoolers).
2. This group includes those aged 5 who are in full-time schooling.
3. Examples include being restrained in a stroller, car seat or high chair.

In 2017–18, the ABS National Health Survey collected information for the first time on physical activity at work. Therefore all results for adults include physical activity at work.

Based on the guidelines, in this report insufficient physical activity was defined as:

- Children aged 2-5 who did not complete at least 180 minutes of physical activity per day
- Children and adolescents aged 5-17 who did not complete at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day
- Adults aged 18-64 who did not complete at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity across 5 or more days in the last week
- Adults aged 65 and over who did not complete at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day on 5 or more days in the last week.

Children and adolescents

The Australian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend children and young people (aged 5-17) accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day (Department of Health 2019).

The most recent data available on physical activity in children and adolescents is the ABS 2011-12 National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey. For the full results of the analysis see Physical activity across the life stages.

Children aged 2-5

In 2011-12, only 17% of children aged 2-5 met both the physical activity and sedentary screen-based behaviour guidelines on all 7 days.

About 6 in 10 (61%) children aged 2-5 met the physical activity guideline, and one-quarter (25%) met the sedentary screen-based behaviour guideline (AIHW 2018).

Children aged 5-11 and 12-17

The majority of children and adolescents are not meeting the physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines.

In 2011-12, around:

- 1 in 10 (12%) children aged 5-12 and only 2% of young people aged 13-17 met both the physical activity and sedentary screen-based behaviour guidelines
- 1 in 4 (26%) children aged 5-12 and around 1 in 10 (8%) children aged 13-17 met the physical activity guideline
- 1 in 3 (35%) children aged 5-12 and 1 in 5 (20%) children aged 13-17 met the sedentary screen-based behaviour guideline (AIHW 2018).

Muscle strengthening activities

The Guidelines recommend children and adolescents undertake muscle strengthening activities at least 3 times a week.

While this encompasses all of the muscle strengthening activities mentioned earlier, not all were captured or prompted as responses in the data source for this section, the ABS National Health Survey (ABS 2018). These data are only available for adolescents aged 15 to 17 years.

In 2017-18, 16% of 15 to 17 year olds did muscle strengthening activities on 3 or more days a week (22% of boys and 8% of girls).

Only 2% of 15 to 17 year olds met both the physical activity and muscle strengthening guidelines (ABS 2018).

Adults

Just over 1 in 2 adults (55%) did not participate in sufficient physical activity in 2017-18. Women were more likely than men to be insufficiently active (59% compared to 50%).
The rate of insufficient physical activity generally increases with increasing age (Figure 1). Among 18-24 year olds, 41% of men and 48% of women were insufficiently active. For those aged 65 and over, 69% of men and 75% of women were insufficiently active.

**Figure 1: Prevalence of insufficient physical activity among adults, by age and sex, 2017-18**

![Graph showing prevalence of insufficient physical activity by age group for men and women, 2017-18](image)

*Source: AIHW analysis of ABS 2019 (see Table S1a for footnotes).*

**Muscle strengthening activities**

The physical activity guidelines also recommend Australian adults aged 18-64 undertake muscle strengthening activities at least 2 times a week, and adults aged 65 and over incorporate muscle strengthening activities.

While this encompasses all of these muscle strengthening activities mentioned earlier, not all were captured or prompted as responses in the data source for this section, the ABS National Health Survey (ABS 2018).

In 2017-18, 23% of adults aged 18 and over did muscle strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week (22% of women and 25% of men) (Table S1a).

Only 15% of adults met both the physical activity and muscle strengthening guidelines—17% of men and 14% of women (Table S1a).

**Population groups**

There were similar levels of insufficient physical activity among adults living in all remoteness areas:

- 55% for *Outer regional and remote* areas
- 53% for *Inner regional* areas
- 54% for *Major cities* (Figure 2).

In 2017-18, 63% of people from the lowest socioeconomic areas were insufficiently active, compared with 48% in the highest socioeconomic areas (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Prevalence of insufficient physical activity among adults, by selected population characteristics, 2017-18**

![Graph showing prevalence of insufficient physical activity by socioeconomic status and remoteness, 2017-18](image)
Trends
After adjusting for age, there was a slight decrease in the proportion of adults who were insufficiently active between 2007–08 and 2017–18 — decreasing from 69% to 65%. However rates have not changed significantly since 2011–12 (Figure 3). These results do not include activity undertaken at work.

Figure 3: Prevalence of insufficient physical activity among adults from 2007-08 to 2017-18

Note: Rates are age-standardised to the 2001 Australian population.
Source: AIHW analysis ABS 2019; ABS 2016; ABS 2014 and ABS 2010 see Table S3 for footnotes).

References


AIHW 2018. Physical activity across the life stages. Cat. no. PHE 225. Canberra: AIHW.

Insufficient physical activity variations

Background
This chapter uses data from the 2017–18 National Health Survey, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to investigate in greater depth exactly how much physical and muscle strengthening activity is being done by adults aged 18 and over, and adolescents aged 15 to 17, who did not meet the recommended amount of physical activity according to the Australian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour guidelines (Department of Health 2017) (the guidelines).

It examines the number of days on which physical activity was undertaken, the number of minutes performed, broken down into 30 minute increments, for those aged 18 and over, and 60 minute increments for 15 to 17 year olds. It also looks the number of days on which muscle strengthening activities were performed in the last week.

About not meeting the guidelines
Those considered as not meeting the guidelines in this report, are defined in accordance with the definition in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Insufficient physical activity</th>
<th>Insufficient muscle strengthening activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 to 17 years</td>
<td>Have not completed at least 60 minutes per day of physical activity on each day of the previous week</td>
<td>Have not done muscle strengthening activities on at least 3 days in the previous week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 64 years</td>
<td>Have not accumulated at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity across at least 5 days in the previous week</td>
<td>Have not done muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days in the previous week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and over</td>
<td>Have not completed at least 30 minutes per day of physical activity, on at least 5 days in the previous week</td>
<td>Have not done muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days in the previous week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that some people undertook more than the recommended minimum minutes, but were considered to have not met the guidelines as they did not do so on at least the recommended number of days. Similarly, some people exercised on the recommended number of days (or more), but were considered to have not met the guidelines, as they did not undertake the recommended number of minutes of physical activity.

How were the data collected?
The 2017–18 National Health Survey (ABS 2018) included a collection of self-reported measures of physical activity. Responses were collected by trained interviewers. Participants were asked questions about how much physical activity they did over the previous week, the types of physical activity undertaken, the intensity, and the amount.

Examples of some survey questions include:
- What was the total amount of time you spent walking for fitness, recreation or sport in the last week?
- In the last week, did you do any exercise which caused a large increase in your heart rate or breathing, that is, vigorous exercise? (For example, jogging, cycling, aerobics, competitive tennis?)
- Some activities are designed to increase muscle strength or tone, such as lifting weights, resistance training, pull-ups, push-ups, or sit-ups. Including any activities already mentioned, in the last week did you do any strength or toning activities?

The 2017–18 National Health Survey also included, for the first time, questions on workplace physical activity. These questions have been incorporated into this report to calculate the amounts of physical activity undertaken. Examples of questions on workplace physical activity include:
- Does your work involve activity that causes a moderate increase in heart rate or breathing, such as brisk walking or carrying light loads, for at least 10 minutes continuously?
- Does your work involve vigorous-intensity activity that causes a large increase in heart rate or breathing, like carrying or lifting heavy loads, digging or construction work, for at least 10 minutes continuously?

For further information, refer to the ABS National Health Survey: First Results, 2017-18.
In 2017–18, the majority of people across all age groups, with the exception of males aged 18 to 64, did not meet their age-appropriate guidelines for physical activity or muscle strengthening activity. Just under half (46%) of adult men aged 18 to 64 did not meet the physical activity component of the guideline. Those in the youngest (15 to 17) and oldest (65 and over) age groups were less likely to meet either the physical activity or muscle strengthening activity components of the guidelines compared with those in the 18 to 64 age group.

A greater proportion of females did not meet either component of the guideline across all age groups, with females aged 15 to 17 having the highest proportion not meeting the guideline for physical activity (95%, compared with 84% of males aged 15 to 17) and muscle strengthening activity (91%, compared with 78% of males aged 15 to 17).

It should be noted that, as the guidelines recommend different amounts of physical activity are required at various stages of life, the calculation of those not meeting the guidelines varies accordingly. For this reason, caution should be exercised in drawing direct comparisons between age groups.

The first dashboard describes the proportion of people aged 15 to 17, 18 to 64, and 65 and over who did not do sufficient activity in the previous week to meet the physical activity component of their age-appropriate guidelines. A high proportion of both males (84%) and females (95%) aged 15 to 17 did not meet the physical activity component of the guidelines. Similarly, the majority of people aged 65 and over did not meet the physical activity component of the guideline - 69% of men and 75% of women. Close to half of men (46%) and women (55%) aged 18 to 64 did not meet the physical activity component of the guideline.

The additional dashboard inside the below visualisation provides the breakdown of those failing to meet the muscle strengthening component of the guideline, by age and sex, in the previous week. The majority of all age groups failed to meet the muscle strengthening component of the guideline.

Figure 1: Proportion of people not meeting the guidelines, by age, sex and activity type, 2017–18

How does insufficient physical activity vary by age?

18 to 64 year olds

In 2017–18, 46% of men and 55% of women aged 18 to 64 did not meet the physical activity guideline.

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**Days of physical activity in the last week**

This section looks at those who did no physical activity (that is, 0 days in the last week), those who did any amount of physical activity on 1, 2, 3 or 4 days in the last week, and those who accumulated less than 150 minutes of physical activity, but did physical activity on 5 or more days of the previous week.

Among the 18 to 64 year old men and women who did not meet the physical activity guideline:

- only a small proportion did physical activity on 5 or more days in the last week (13% or less of men and women, across all age groups)
• approximately 1 in 3 men (34%) aged 18 to 24 did physical activity on 4 days in the last week, compared with 1 in 4 (25%) women in the same age group.

**Minutes of physical activity in the last week**

This section looks at those who accumulated fewer than 150 minutes over any number of days in the previous week (in 30-minute time increments, from 0 to 29 minutes, to 120-149 minutes), and those who did 150 minutes or more in the previous week, but on fewer than 5 days.

Among 18 to 64 year old men and women who did not meet the physical activity guideline:

• almost half (49%) of men and 38% of women aged 18 to 24 did 150 minutes or more of physical activity in the last week
• more than a third of men (34%) and women (35%) aged 55 to 64 completed less than 30 minutes of physical activity in the last week.

**Average days of physical activity, by time increment, in the last week**

This section looks at the average number of days in the last week on which all people aged 18 to 64 undertook physical activity, by time increment.

To calculate the average number of days on which physical activity was done, the lowest time increment, of 0 to 29 minutes was separated into:

• those doing 0 minutes, on 0 days and therefore completely physically inactive, and
• those doing 1-29 minutes.

Among the 18 to 64 year olds who did not meet the physical activity guideline:

• just under a quarter of men (23%) and women (23%) were completely physically inactive (that is, did 0 minutes of physical activity in the last week, on 0 days). Taking into account that more women than men did not meet the physical activity guidelines overall, the estimated number of men and women aged 18 to 64 doing who did no physical activity in the last week equates to 784,000 and 944,000 respectively. For more information on estimates, refer to Supplementary table S9.
• men and women who did the highest weekly minutes of physical activity (150 minutes or more) did so on an average of 3 days in the last week.

The first dashboard in this visualisation details the number of days on which physical activity was undertaken by those aged 18 to 64 who did not meet the physical activity guidelines, by sex, and broken down into the following age sub-groups: 18 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54 and 55 to 64. Fewer than 14% of males and 12% of females of all age sub-groups did physical activity on the required 5 or more days in the last week. Approximately a third (34%) of men and a quarter (25%) of women in the youngest age sub-group (18 to 24) undertook physical activity on 4 days in the last week. There was a higher proportion of people doing no activity in the last week (that is 0 days) among the older age sub-group - 32% of men and 29% of women aged 55 to 64 doing physical activity on no days in the previous week. This proportion was lower among the younger age group - 10% of men and 17% of women aged 18 to 24 doing physical activity on no days in the previous week.

The additional dashboards in the below visualisation provide a further breakdown of the number of minutes (in 30 minute increments from 0 to 149 minutes, and those who did 150 minutes or more) of physical activity undertaken by those aged 18 to 64, and the average days on which physical activity was undertaken, by minutes of physical activity done in the last week.
In 2017-18, 69% of men and 75% of women aged 65 and over did not meet the physical activity guideline.

Days of physical activity in the last week

This section looks at those who did no physical activity (that is, 0 days of physical activity) in the last week, those who did any amount of physical activity on 1, 2, 3 or 4 days in the last week, and those who did physical activity on 5 or more days in the last week, but did not complete the recommended 30 minutes or more of physical activity on each of those days.

Among the men and women aged 65 and over who did not meet the physical activity guideline:

- just over a third (35%) of men and two thirds of women (40%) aged 65 and over were completely physically inactive in the last week (that is, did 0 days of physical activity in the last week)
- only 17% of men and 12% of women aged 65 and over completed some physical activity on the recommended 5 or more days in the last week.

Minutes of physical activity in the last week

This section looks at those who did fewer than 150 minutes of physical activity in the previous week (in 30-minute time increments), and those who accumulated 150 minutes or more in the previous week, but did not complete at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day on 5 or more days in the previous week.

Among those men and women aged 65 and over who did not meet the physical activity guideline:

- more than one third (39%) of men and almost half (47%) of women completed less than 30 minutes in the last week
- at the other end of the spectrum, 29% of men and 18% of women completed 150 minutes or more of physical activity in the last week.

Average days of physical activity, by time increment, in the last week

This section looks at average days per week on which physical activity was done, by time increment. Due to small numbers within each time category, these data cannot be broken down by sex.

To calculate the average days on which physical activity was done, the lowest time increment, of 0 to 29 minutes was separated into those doing 0 minutes (therefore, on 0 days), and those doing 1-29 minutes.
Among the men and women aged 65 and over who did not meet the physical activity guideline:

- 38% of people were completely physically inactive (that is, did 0 minutes of physical activity in the last week, on 0 days) - equivalent to an estimated 983,000 people aged 65 and over who did no physical activity in the last week. For more information on estimates, refer to Supplementary table S9.
- the 23% of people who performed 150 minutes or more of physical activity in the last week did so on an average of 4 days.

The first dashboard in this visualisation details the number of days on which physical activity was undertaken by those aged 65 and over who did not meet the physical activity guidelines, by sex. Among both men and women in this age group, the highest proportion fell in the 0 days category - that is, 35% of men and 41% of women aged 65 and over did no physical activity in the previous week. Further, only 17% of men and 12% of women aged 65 and over did physical activity on the recommended 5 days or more in the last week.

The additional dashboards in the below visualisation provide a further breakdown of the number of minutes (in 30 minute increments from 0 to 149 minutes, and those who did 150 minutes or more) of physical activity undertaken by those aged 65 and over, and the average days on which physical activity was undertaken, by minutes of physical activity done in the last week.

**Figure 3: Participation in physical activity by days, minutes and average days in the last week, among adults aged 65 and over who did not meet the national physical activity guidelines, 2017–18**

Days of physical activity in the last week, by sex, among those aged 65 and over, who did not participate in sufficient physical activity

![Days of physical activity by sex](chart_url)

**Notes:**
1. Physical activity includes walking for fitness, recreation or sport; walking for transport; moderate and vigorous activity; and moderate and vigorous workplace activity.
2. Those aged 65 and over who did not participate in sufficient physical activity are those who did not complete at least 20 minutes of physical activity per day on 5 or more days in the previous week.

**Source:** ABS analysis of.ABS 2018, Table 57

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**15 to 17 year olds**

In 2017–18, 84% of males and 95% of females aged 18 to 64 did not meet the physical activity guideline.

**Days of physical activity in the last week**

This section looks at those who did no physical activity (that is, 0 days of physical activity) in the last week, those who did any amount of physical activity on 1 to 6 days in the last week, and those who did physical activity on 7 days in the last week, but did not do at least 60 minutes of physical activity on each of those days.

Among those males and females aged 15 to 17 who did not meet the physical activity guideline:

- 28% of males and 24% of females did physical activity on 5 days in the last week
- 18% of males and 11% of females did some physical activity on the recommended 7 days in the last week
- 11% of males and 13% of females did completely physically inactive (that is, did 0 days of physical activity in the last week).

The average number of days on which physical activity was done, by time increment, could not be reported for this age group, due to small numbers within each time category.

**Minutes of physical activity in the last week**
This section looks at those who did fewer than 420 minutes of physical activity in the previous week (in 60 minute increments, from 0 to 59 minutes, to 360 to 419 minutes), and those who accumulated 420 minutes or more in the previous week, but did not complete at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day on every day of the previous week.

Among adolescents aged 15 to 17 who did not meet the physical activity guideline:

- more than a third of males (35%) completed 420 minutes or more in the last week, compared with 19% of females
- 4 in 10 females and 2 in 10 males did less than 2 hours of physical activity in the last week.

The first dashboard in this visualisation details the number of days on which physical activity was undertaken by those aged 15 to 17, who did not meet the physical activity guidelines, by sex. Only 18% of males and 11% of females did physical activity on the recommended 7 days in the previous week. However, almost a quarter (28% of males and 24% of females) did physical activity on 5 days in the previous week. Approximately 1 in 9 males and 1 in 8 females did not do any physical activity in the last week (that is, on 0 days).

The additional dashboard in the below visualisation provides a further breakdown of the number of minutes (in 60 minute increments between 0 and 419 minutes, and those who did 420 minutes or more) of physical activity undertaken by those aged 15 to 17, by sex.

How does insufficient muscle strengthening activity vary by age?

**18 years and over**

In 2017–18, 73% of men and 77% of women aged 18 to 64 did not meet the muscle strengthening activity guideline. Of those aged 65 and over, 83% of men and 85% of women did not meet the muscle strengthening activity guideline.

This visualisation shows the breakdown of the number of days on which muscle strengthening activities were done by those aged 18 and over who did not meet the guideline of undertaking muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days in the last week – that is, the proportion of people who did muscle strengthening activities on only 1 day, and those who did no muscle strengthening activities in the last week.
week. The vast majority (greater than 88% of all age subgroups, for both males and females) not meeting the muscle strengthening activity guidelines did not do any muscle strengthening activities in the last week, with the remaining minority (11% or fewer) doing muscle strengthening activities on only 1 day in the last week.

Figure 5: Participation in muscle strengthening activities, by age, sex and days in the last week, in adults aged 18 and over who did not meet the muscle strengthening activity guidelines, 2017-18

15 to 17 year olds

In 2017–18, 78% of males and 91% of females aged 15 to 17 did not meet the muscle strengthening activity guideline.

Days of muscle strengthening activities in the last week

This section looks at those aged 15 to 17 who performed muscle strengthening activities on 0, 1, or 2 days in the last week.

Among those males and females aged 15 to 17 who did not meet the muscle strengthening activities guideline, a similar pattern was seen to that of the older age groups:

- the majority of males (68%) and females (77%) aged 15-17 years did not perform muscle strengthening activities on any day in the last week.

This visualisation shows the breakdown of the number of days on which muscle strengthening activities were done by those aged 15 to 17 who did not meet the guideline of undertaking muscle strengthening activities on at least 3 days in the last week - that is, the proportion of people who did muscle strengthening activities on 1 day, those who did it on 2 days and those who did no muscle strengthening activities in the last week. More than two-thirds (68%) of males and three-quarters (77%) of females did not do any muscle strengthening activities in the previous week (that is, on 0 days). The remaining proportion was approximately evenly divided between those who did muscle strengthening activities on 1 day (15% of males, 13% of females) and those who did so on 2 days (16% of males and 10% of females).
Figure 6: Participation in muscle strengthening activities, by sex, and days in the last week, in adolescents aged 15–17 years who did not meet the muscle strengthening activity guidelines, 2017–18

Note: Those aged 15 to 17 who did not participate in sufficient muscle strengthening activities are those who did not complete muscle strengthening activities on at least 3 days in the previous week.

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS 2019, Table 58
http://www.aihw.gov.au

References


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Technical notes

About the ABS National Health Survey

This web report contains results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) National Health Survey (NHS) 2017–18, collected between July 2017 to June 2018.

The 2017–18 NHS is the most recent in a series of Australia-wide health surveys conducted by the ABS. It was designed to collect a range of information about the health of Australians, including:

- prevalence of long-term health conditions
- health risk factors such as smoking, overweight and obesity, alcohol consumption and exercise
- use of health services such as consultations with health practitioners and actions people have recently taken for their health
- demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

The 2017-18 NHS collected data on children and adults living in private dwellings but excluded persons living in non-private dwellings, very remote areas and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

For further information, refer to the ABS National Health Survey: First Results, 2017–18.

Primary Health Network data

This release includes the following indicator by Primary Health Network (PHN):

Percentage of adults who met the physical activity guidelines

This is measured using the following definition:

- Percentage of adults aged 18-64 who undertook 150-300 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both, and were active on 5 or more days; and
- Percentage of adults aged 65 and over who were active for 30 minutes or more per day on 5 or more days.

About the data

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) are local organisations that connect health services across a specific geographic area, with the boundaries defined by the Australian Government Department of Health.

The quality of estimates from the NHS can vary across PHN areas, as the survey was not specifically designed to produce estimates at this level of geography.

As an indication of the accuracy of proportions, 95% confidence intervals were produced. These were calculated by the ABS using relative standard error (RSE) estimates of the proportion.

To ensure robust reporting of these data by PHN areas, suppression or interpret with caution rules were developed and applied by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Estimates of a percentage or its complement that had a relative standard error greater than 50% were suppressed. These estimates were considered unreliable for most practical purposes.

Data for PHN areas were suppressed if there was the likelihood of a non-representative sample, that is, where the survey sample count in the PHN area was less than 20% of the expected number of adults.

The 'interpret with caution' flag was applied to the data if the relative standard error associated with the percentage or its complement was greater than 25%. This indicates the proportion derived is subject to high sampling error and should be used with caution.

Data for Northern Territory should be interpreted with caution as the NHS excluded discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and very remote areas, which comprise around 28% of the estimated resident population of the Northern Territory.
Notes

Amendments

Oct 2020 - The footnotes in the data tables: Insufficient physical activity supplementary tables, released 19 July 2019, incorrectly state that, for the 65 and over age group, minutes of vigorous activity are multiplied by 2. This statement has been removed from the footnotes where applicable, as vigorous activity was not multiplied by 2 in the calculation of minutes of physical activity in those aged 65 and over. There has been no change to the data itself, which were not multiplied by 2 in the analysis.

30 Sep 2019 - The source data hyperlink for Figure 3 has been replaced to direct to the correct data tables.

19 Jul 2019 - New data by PHN has been added to the supplementary tables.

Data quality statement

For more information about the ABS 2017-18 National Health Survey see:

4324.0.55.001 - Microdata: National Health Survey, 2017-18
Data

Data tables: Insufficient physical activity supplementary tables
Download Data tables: Insufficient physical activity supplementary tables. Format: XLSX 157Kb XLSX 157Kb

Data tables: Insufficient physical activity variations supplementary tables
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- Physical activity across the life stages | 20 Jul 2018

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