



Our Health

Examining Topics from 'Our Health is in Our Hands'

Physical Activity in Middle-aged and Older Adults in Ingham County



Photo credit: Bill Branson

Often old age is viewed as a time of limited activity and disability, but this does not have to be the case. Physical activity is key to preserving mobility. Physical activity builds muscle mass which helps to prevent injuries and can keep aging adults feeling good and on the go. In this first issue of the CA BRF&SC Survey Dispatch we examine the habits of middle-aged and older adults in Ingham County related to physical activity in their non-work (or leisure) time.

There are several national objectives related to physical activity for all adults. One is to reduce to 20.0% the proportion of adults who engage in no physical activity in their spare time (Healthy People 2010 objective 22-1).¹ Table 1 shows the percentage of adults 55 years old and older who do not participate in leisure time physical activity for a variety of geographic and demographic characteristics. Although some groups were close to reaching the Healthy People 2010 target, no group of middle-aged and older adults in Ingham County did. Overall 32.9% (±4.6%) of middle-aged and older adults did not participate in any physical activity outside of work. More adults between the ages of 65-74 years old engaged in

leisure time physical activity than their 55-64 years and over 75 year old peers. Additionally, more males engaged in leisure time physical activity than females. Approximately one-third of non-Hispanic White and half of non-Hispanic Black residents participate in no leisure time physical activity. Middle-aged and older adults with at least a college degree and those whose household income was at least \$75,000 annually came closest to the Healthy People 2010 target.

Healthy People 2010 objective 22-2 recommends that we: "Increase to 30.0% the proportion of adults who engage in physical activity for at least 30 minutes per day, five or more days

a week."¹ Table 1 shows the percentage of middle-aged and older adults who are physically active for at least 30 minutes daily. Just as in the previous Healthy People 2010 objective, no group in Ingham County achieved the target goal, but a few groups were relatively close. Overall, only 12.1% (±3.3%) of Ingham County residents 55 years old or older engaged in the recommended amount of physical activity. The proportion of older adults meeting or exceeding the Healthy People 2010 goal was slightly higher in county residents not living in the city of Lansing. Other characteristics associated with engaging in the recommended amount of physical activity were: being male, being non-Hispanic White, not having completed high school or having at least a college degree. Two particularly noteworthy characteristics are age group and income. Among persons over the age of 55 years old, the group with the highest proportion of persons who participated in the recommended amount of physical activity was between the ages of 65 and 74 years old. Additionally, an exceptionally high proportion of middle-aged and older adults with household incomes between \$50,000 and \$74,000 met or exceeded the Healthy People 2010 recommendations.

Table 1. Leisure time physical activity among Ingham County residents 55 years old and older

	No leisure time physical activity		Thirty minutes of leisure time physical activity daily	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
HP 2010 TARGET	20.0%	---	30.0%	---
TOTAL	32.9%	(±4.6%)	12.1%	(±3.3%)
COUNTY GEOGRAPHY				
Lansing	36.2%	(±6.1%)	10.7%	(±4.1%)
Remainder of Ingham County	28.6%	(±6.9%)	13.9%	(±5.5%)
LANSING NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICE AREAS				
Allen Neighborhood Center	25.1%	(±12.4%)	16.7%	(±10.9%)
Northwest Health Initiative	40.4%	(±10.3%)	7.4%	(±5.9%)
Southside Community Health Center	40.5%	(±11.4%)	8.9%	(±6.8%)
Remainder of Lansing	33.6%	(±16.0%)	**	---
AGE				
55-64	29.9%	(±6.3%)	9.6%	(±4.3%)
65-74	27.1%	(±9.1%)	22.4%	(±8.6%)
75+	41.9%	(±8.9%)	5.6%	(±3.9%)
SEX				
Male	29.5%	(±6.4%)	13.3%	(±5.1%)
Female	35.7%	(±6.4%)	11.0%	(±4.4%)
RACE/ETHNICITY				
Non-Hispanic White	30.6%	(±5.1%)	13.5%	(±3.8%)
Non-Hispanic Black	51.2%	(±7.7%)	4.3%	(±3.2%)
Hispanic	**	---	**	---
EDUCATION				
less than high school diploma/GED	37.3%	(±14.0%)	14.9%	(±11.8%)
high school diploma/GED	36.1%	(±9.1%)	6.9%	(±4.8%)
some college	39.0%	(±9.4%)	11.1%	(±6.3%)
college graduate or more	26.1%	(±7.3%)	15.4%	(±5.9%)
INCOME				
Less than \$25,000	43.1%	(±10.0%)	8.1%	(±5.8%)
\$25,000 to \$34,999	36.1%	(±13.5%)	9.9%	(±8.8%)
\$35,000 to \$49,999	36.1%	(±11.8%)	11.5%	(±8.3%)
\$50,000 to \$74,999	26.2%	(±11.0%)	22.7%	(±11.1%)
\$75,000 or more	23.7%	(±12.6%)	17.5%	(±10.5%)

For more information about our nation's health objectives, look up Healthy People 2010 at: www.healthypeople.gov

Physical activity contributes to a person's well-being. When rating their physical health status as 'good', 'moderate', or 'poor', 70.0% ($\pm 5.6\%$) of physically active middle-aged and older adults in Ingham County described their physical health to be 'good' (Figure 1). Meanwhile 52.9% ($\pm 8.6\%$) of persons who engaged in no leisure time physical activity rated their physical health status as 'good'. Physical activity may also improve a person's mental health.² An estimated 83.9% ($\pm 4.4\%$) of middle-aged and older adults in Ingham County who were physically active also rated mental health status as 'good'. The proportion of those who described their mental health status as being 'good', but were not physically active, was slightly lower at 72.2% ($\pm 7.5\%$).

Although not the only form of physical activity, studies reveal that walking is the most popular form of physical activity.^{3, 4, 5} Whether a person decides to participate in this easy and low-cost activity is influenced by their perception of the safety of the environment they walk in. When asked how they or a family member would feel walking alone in their neighborhood, 86.0% ($\pm 9.5\%$) of adults in Ingham County who received the recommended amount of physical activity reported that they would feel "very safe" (Figure 2). Of those who were physically active, but did not get enough physical activity, the proportion of those who would feel "very safe" dropped to 67.6% ($\pm 6.3\%$). Lastly, only 60.6% ($\pm 8.2\%$) of adults who did not participate in any leisure time physical activity said they would feel 'very safe' walking in their neighborhood alone. Neighborhood safety is not just an issue of crime. Some neighborhoods are unsafe to walk in because there are no sidewalks, forcing pedestrians to share the road with bicycles and motorized vehicles.

Physical activity is important at every age, but especially for middle-aged and older adults. To preserve mobility, middle-aged and older adults should be encouraged to be as physically active as they are able. Remember, everyone should consult their medical provider before beginning any new exercise routine.

References

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3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1996.
4. Rafferty AP, McGee HB, Petersmark KA, et al. Proportion of trips made by walking: estimating state-level baseline for Healthy People 2010 Objective 22214. *American Journal of Health Promotion* 2002; 18:387-91.
5. Siegel PR, Brackbill R, Heath G. The epidemiology of walking for exercise: implications for promoting activity among sedentary groups. *American Journal of Public Health* 1995; 85:706-10.

Figure 1. Physical health status among physically active and not physically active middle aged and older adults in Ingham County. 2006 CA BRF&SC Survey

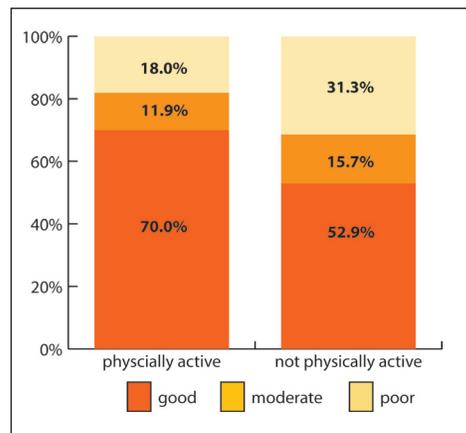
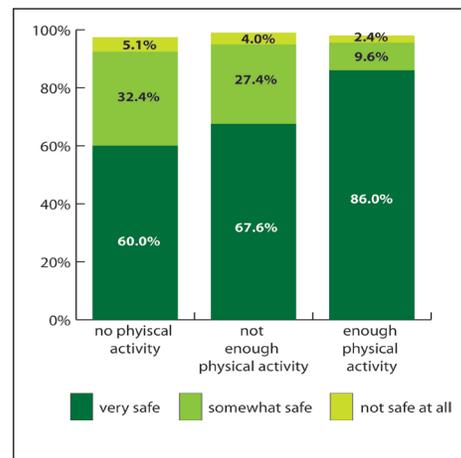


Figure 2. Perceived neighborhood safety and physical activity among middle aged and older adults in Ingham County. 2006 CA BRF&SC Survey



About Our Health is in Our Hands

Published in 2004, *Our Health is in Our Hands*, is a report of the health status of the residents of Ingham County. Not only does it document the traditional topics and behaviors related to health (i.e. physical activity, substance abuse, tobacco use, etc.), but it includes a review of the social determinants of health. Social determinants of health are factors in the social environment that contribute to or detract from the health of individuals and communities. Examples of social determinants of health, discussed in *Our Health is in Our Hands* are social connection, population shifts, and environmental quality. Copies of this document are available at <http://hd.ingham.org/publications.aspx>.

About the Capital Area Behavioral Risk Factor & Social Capital Survey

The Capital Area Behavioral Risk Factor & Social Capital Survey is a telephone health survey of households that collects information on health behaviors, preventive health practices, health care access, social cohesion and interactions. Modeled after the Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Survey and the national Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, information gathered from this survey is used to identify emerging health obstacles, monitor health objectives, and develop and evaluate public health policies/programs in Ingham and surrounding counties in the Capital Area.

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