

Play and Physical Activity: Findings from the Third Ontario Parent Survey

Prepared by Lauren Wong
Data Specialist, Maximum City
May 2023



Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the participation of caregivers who completed the survey, as well as the contribution of many parent/caregiver and child/youth organizations across the province who assisted with the launch, communication, and marketing of the Ontario Parent Survey. Funding for the survey was provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada to Drs. Andrea Gonzalez and Harriet MacMillan, along with support from the Canada Research Chairs program to Andrea Gonzalez.

A special thank you to Dr. Andrea Gonzalez and Jacinda Burns at McMaster University for their collaboration.



Introduction

The following report is a preliminary summary of findings from specific questions related to child and youth physical activity and outdoor play in the third Ontario Parent Survey (OPS), conducted from August to November of 2022. The OPS focused on issues related to the health and well-being of caregivers, their children, family functioning, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath across a number of domains.

Our previous reporting on physical activity and outdoor play findings from the second Ontario Parent Survey can be found [here](#).



Summary of Key Findings

The overall results from OPS3 show both concerning **low levels** of physical activity and outdoor play when measured against recommended standards, and an **encouraging increase** in activity levels compared to OPS2.

More precisely, during the OPS3 survey period of August to November 2022, the **majority** of children and youth **were under target** for all three measures: moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA); light physical activity (LPA); and outdoor play (OP).

- Only **1 in 6 met the recommended** MVPA standard.
- **Two-thirds** were **under the recommend standard** for LPA, and **one-third** were **extremely under**.
- **Nearly half did not meet the target** for outdoor play.
- **Youth** (ages 12-17) met far fewer targets than children (ages 5-11).

The year-to-year comparison, however, is encouraging. Compared to the previous year's results, which we reported on [here](#), more children and youth were meeting the targets for all three measures, and fewer were extremely under target. Younger children continue to show higher activity levels than adolescents. A more detailed comparison can be found on page 10.



Defining targets for physical activity and outdoor play

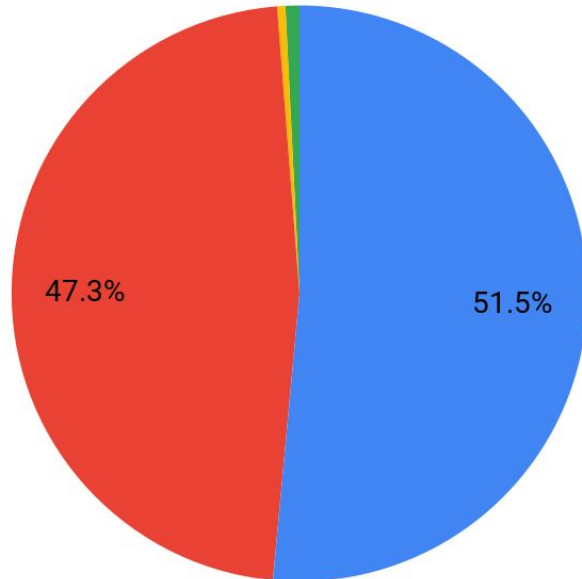
Our analysis looks at three results for physical activity: MVPA, LPA, and OP. Their targets are defined as:

Physical Activity	Meeting Targets	Extremely Under Target	Guidelines
MVPA Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity	≥ 1 hour, 6-7 days a week Getting at least an hour of MVPA on 6-7 days of the week	≥ 1 hour, 0 days a week <i>Never getting an hour of MVPA, on any day of the week</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSEP guidelines recommend at least 60 mins per day.
LPA Light Physical Activity	≥ 2.5 hours per day	≤ 1 hour per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSEP guidelines recommend "several hours per day," which has been interpreted elsewhere as more than 2 or 3 hours.
OP Outdoor Play	> 1 hour per day	≤ 15 minutes per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No established guidelines in Canada. ParticipACTION operationalizes sufficient "active play" as more than 2 hours a day.

Breakdown by Gender

Gender of Respondents (n=2,174)

● Male ● Female ● Transgender ● Other

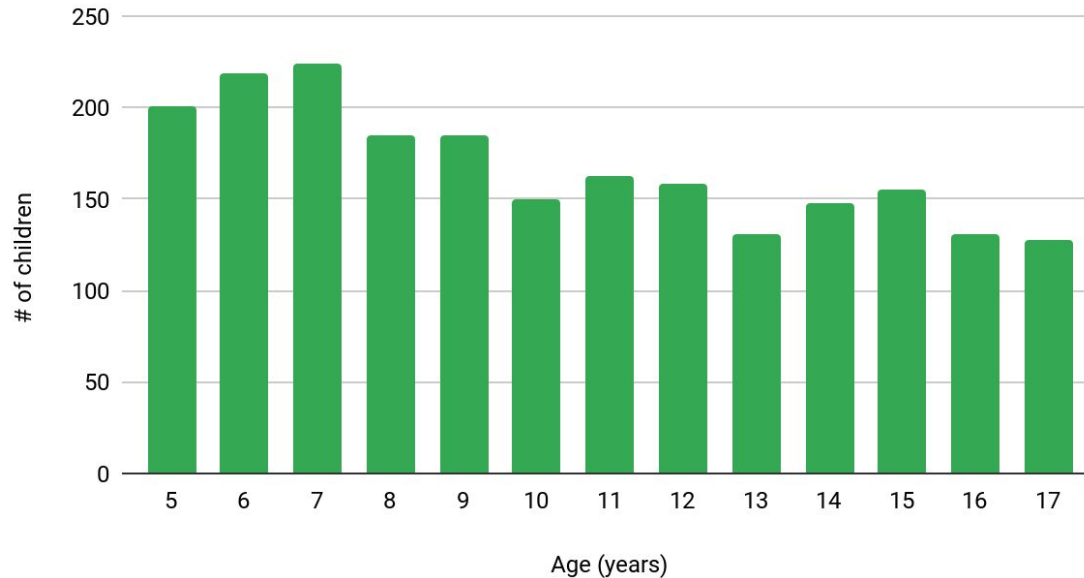


The sample was split approximately **evenly between male and female**.

Additionally, 17 respondents (0.8%) identified as “other”, and 10 (0.5%) identified as transgender.

Breakdown by Age

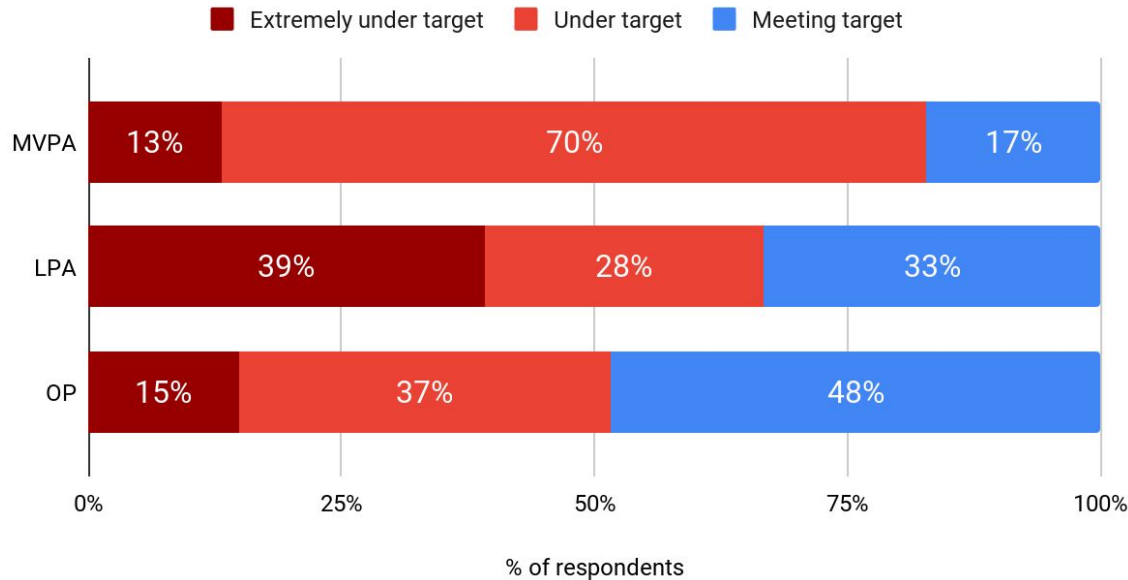
Age of Respondents (n=2,178)



There was good **distribution of ages** among respondents, though younger **children** (ages 5-11) made up the **majority** (61%) of the sample.

Meeting Physical Activity and Outdoor Play Targets

Physical Activity & Outdoor Play



The **majority** of respondents **did not meet targets** for MVPA, LPA, or OP.

Only **1 in 6** respondents **met the MVPA target**.

More than **1 in 3** respondents were **extremely under target for LPA**, getting an hour or less per day.

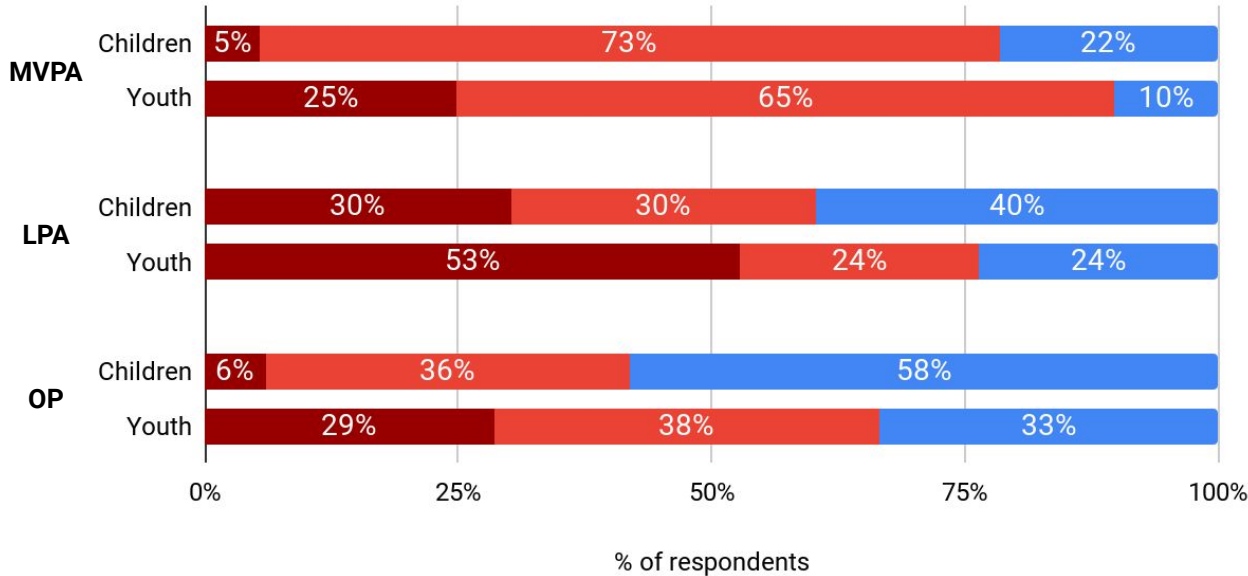
Comparing Age Groups

Ages 5-11 (children)

Ages 12-17 (youth)

Physical Activity & Outdoor Play by Age Group

Extremely under target Under target Meeting target



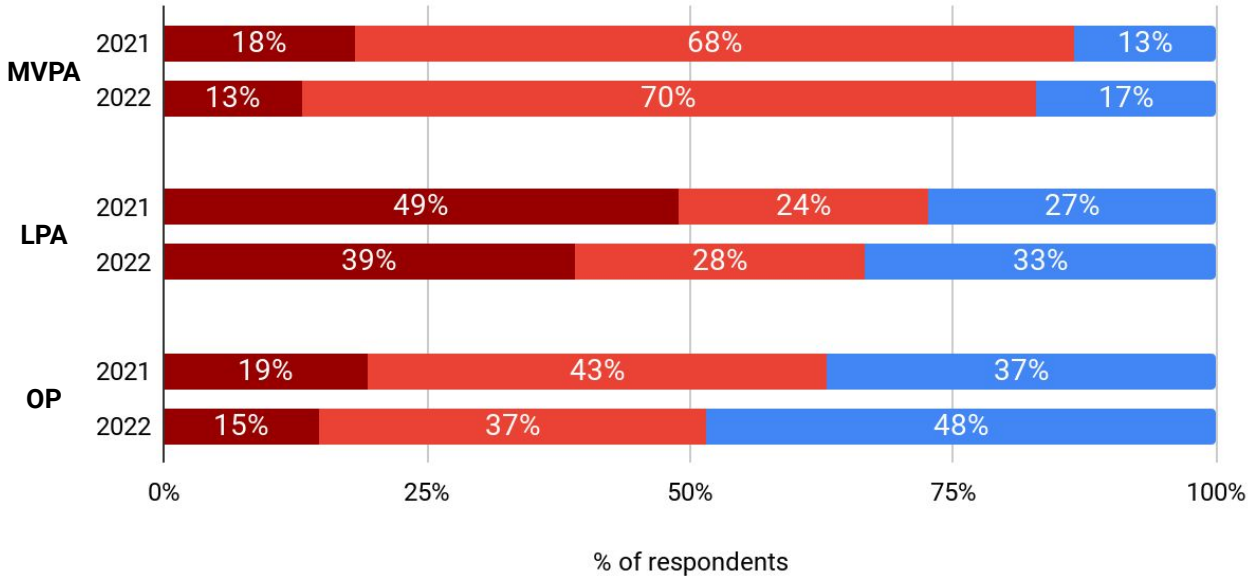
Overall, **youth** (ages 12-17) engaged in **significantly less** physical activity & outdoor play than children (ages 5-11), for **all measures**.

For example, only **1 in 20** children were **extremely under target** for MVPA and OP, compared to **1 in 4** youth.

Comparison with OPS2 Results (2021 vs 2022)

Physical Activity & Outdoor Play by Year

■ Extremely under target
 ■ Under target
 ■ Meeting target



In 2022, **more respondents** were **meeting the targets** for **all measures** of physical activity and outdoor play compared to 2021, and fewer were extremely under target.

Digging Deeper Into Specific Measures

Key Findings:

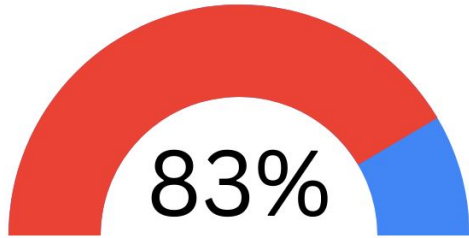
83% of children and youth are **not meeting the MVPA standard** of an hour per day, 6 days a week.

67% of children and youth are **not meeting the LPA standard** of more than 2.5 hours per day.

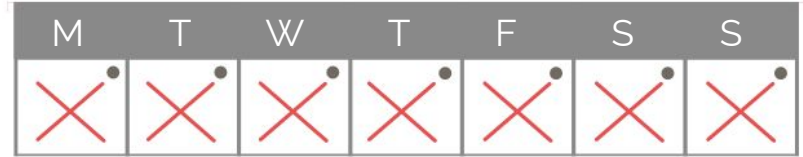
48% of children and youth are **not meeting the outdoor play target** of more than an hour per day.



Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity (MVPA)



5 out of 6 children and youth (83%) are **not meeting the MVPA standard** of an hour per day, 6 days a week.

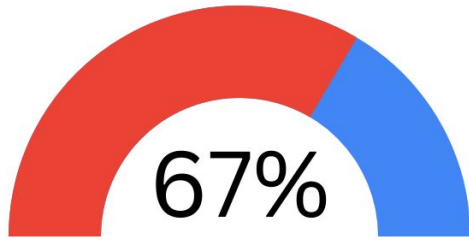


1 in 8 children and youth (17%) are engaging in **less than an hour** of moderate to vigorous physical activity **each day** (Response: 0 days of the week).



Over half (55%) are engaging in an hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity **3 or fewer days a week**.

Light Physical Activity (LPA)



Two-thirds of children and youth are **not meeting the LPA standard** of more than 2.5 hours per day.

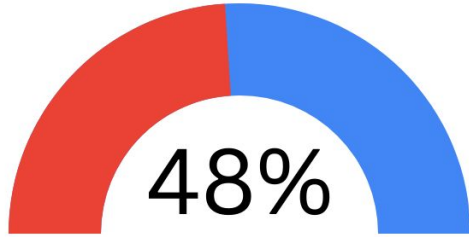


Almost **two fifths** (39%) are getting **an hour or less** of light physical activity per day.

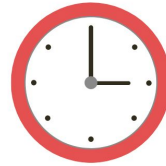


Only **1 in 7** (15%) are getting **5 or more hours** of light physical activity per day.

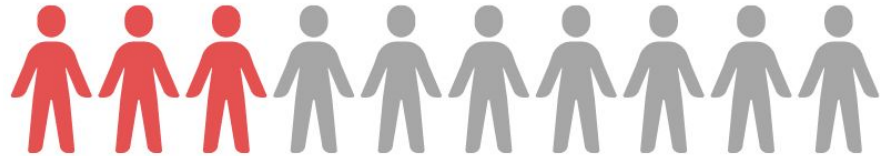
Outdoor Play (OP)



Nearly half of children and youth (48%) are **not meeting the outdoor play target** of more than an hour per day.



1 in 7 (15%) are getting **15 minutes or less** of outdoor play time per day.



Over one-third (35%) are getting **less than 1 hour** of outdoor play time per day.



A more detailed report with further analysis will be published in the summer of 2023.
Contact: info@maximumcity.ca