

# Physical Activity - Youth

## DESCRIPTION

Moderate amounts of physical activity are recommended for everyone. Benefits can be obtained from longer sessions of lower intensity activities (e.g., walking, golf), or shorter sessions of more intense activities (e.g., biking, running). Physical activity can improve bone health, cardiorespiratory and muscle fitness, mental skills and the ability to pay attention. It can also decrease body fat, and reduce symptoms of depression.<sup>1</sup>

## HOW WE ARE DOING

Participation in physical activity tends to decline as age increases. Nationally, 28.7 percent of youth report meeting the national recommendation of being physically active for 60 or more minutes every day.<sup>2</sup> In Minnesota, 20 percent of 9th graders and 15 percent of 11th graders meet that recommended activity level. In Ramsey County, 16 percent of 9th graders and 11 percent of 11th graders report being physically active for 60 or more minutes daily. These levels do not meet the Healthy People goal of 31.6 percent. Among 9th graders in Ramsey County, 56 percent had less than five days of physical activity for 60 minutes, compared to 48 percent statewide. When students are young, they are often active in physical education classes at school, but this tapers off dramatically in older grades.<sup>3</sup>

## BENCHMARK INDICATOR

Healthy People 2020: Increase the proportions of adolescents who are physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day on seven of the past seven days.

U.S. Target: 31.6 percent

## DISPARITIES

There are significant gender disparities related to physical activity. In 2015 nationally, 36 percent of males reported 60 or more minutes of physical activity every day compared to only 17.7 percent of females. There are also racial disparities related to activity. Among American Indian/Alaskan Natives, 31.5 percent (highest level) reported being physically active for 60 or more minutes daily, compared to 17.1 percent (lowest level) of Asians meeting the recommended activity level. Racial/ethnic disparities in physical activity may be partially explained by neighborhood characteristics. For example, having sidewalks or more park space nearby may increase the pleasure or perception of safety, and thus increase the likelihood of participation.<sup>4</sup>

## RISK FACTORS

Physical activity habits begin at an early age and are often carried into adulthood. The biggest risk factor for inactivity is a non-supportive environment. There are several ways that physical activity can be promoted among youth. Parents should be role models for active lifestyles as well as provide supportive environments and opportunities for an active lifestyle. Parents should reduce sedentary time in their family (e.g., time spent watching TV, playing video games, surfing the internet). It is also key that physical activities match the interest and enjoyment of the individual.<sup>5</sup>

## Information to note

- In Ramsey County, 16% of 9th graders and 11% of 11th graders report being physically active for 60 or more minutes every day which does not meet the Healthy People 2020 target of 31.6%.
- There are significant gender and racial disparities related to physical activity.

## Community voice

*"Rec centers are not always open."*

- Hispanic/ Latino Male, age 10-14

Many children mentioned physical activity as influencing their health and cited limited options for indoor and outdoor activity.

<sup>1</sup>Raspberry CN, Lee SM, Robin L, et al. The association between school-based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance: a systematic review of the literature. *Preventive Medicine*. 2011;52:S10-S20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2011.01.027>. Accessed May 2018.

<sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Healthy People.gov*. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives>. Accessed May 2018.

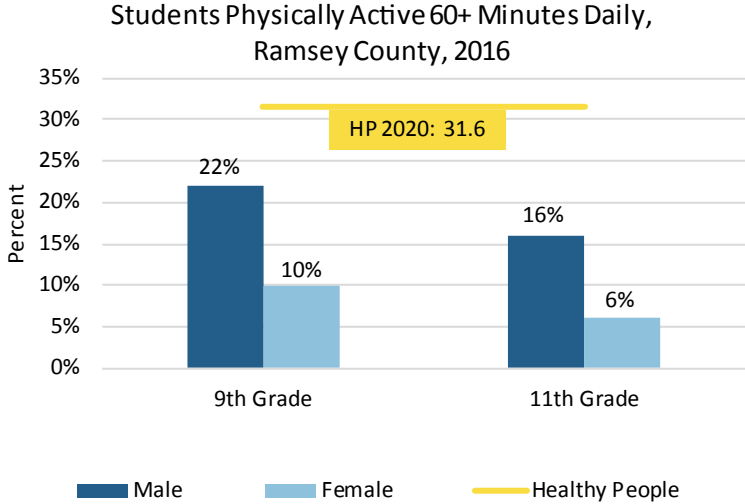
<sup>3</sup>Minnesota Department of Health. *Minnesota Student Survey 2016*. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss/>. Accessed May 2018.

<sup>4</sup>Taylor S, Romley J, Malcolm L, Brown A. Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Likelihood of Physical Activity: The Role of Neighborhood Characteristics. <https://activelivingresearch.org/raciaethnic-disparities-likelihood-physical-activity-role-neighborhood-characteristics>. Presentation at the 2006 Active Living Research Annual Conference. Accessed May 2018.

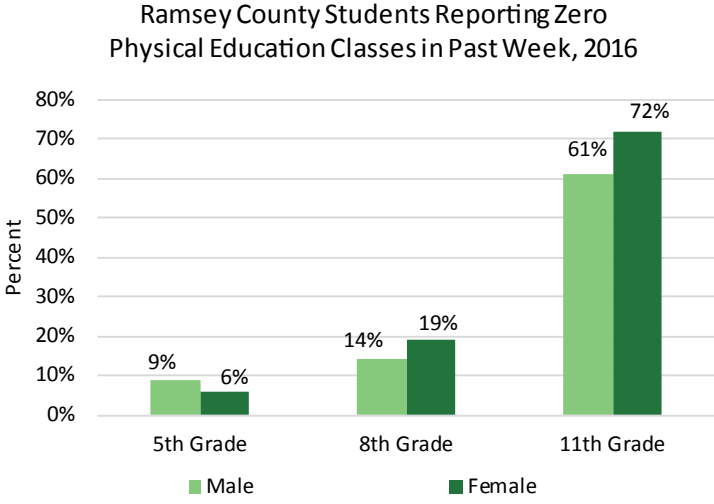
<sup>5</sup>The AHA's Recommendations for Physical Activity in Children. [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyKids/ActivitiesforKids/The-AHAs-Recommendations-for-Physical-Activity-in-Children\\_UCM\\_304053\\_Article.jsp#.WwXU-ZVX6Uk](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyKids/ActivitiesforKids/The-AHAs-Recommendations-for-Physical-Activity-in-Children_UCM_304053_Article.jsp#.WwXU-ZVX6Uk). Accessed May 2018.

## WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health, through the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) grant, works extensively with Ramsey County’s five school districts to increase physical activity among youth. School partners develop initiatives that increase opportunities for physical activity including: Safe Routes to School promote walking or biking to school, focused programs to engage specific at-risk students in physical activity and working with school districts to provide Active Classroom/Recess trainings to train teachers in how to offer more time for being active during the school day.



Source: Minnesota Student Survey<sup>6</sup>



Source: Minnesota Student Survey<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Minnesota Department of Health. Minnesota Student Survey 2016. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss/>. Accessed May 2018.