



Considerations for using a single item physical activity self-report measure for adults

Accurate measurement of physical activity (PA) is important for assessing population trends and assessing the effectiveness of interventions and programs designed to increase PA participation. While device-based measurements of PA (e.g. accelerometers) are typically the recommended method of assessment in these settings, their use is not always feasible (i.e. expensive, low adherence to device wear, practical and logistical constraints).¹ Thus, self-report measures continue to be widely used, but the feasibility of administering long self-report PA measures can be problematic.

The single item measure (SIM) developed by Milton et al. (2011)² has been widely used to assess the PA levels of adults by asking them:

In the past week, on how many days have you done a total of 30 minutes or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise your breathing rate?

[This may include sport, exercise and brisk walking or cycling for recreation or to get to and from places but should not include housework or physical activity that may be part of your job.]

Respondents are asked to select one option between 0-7 days.



Strengths of the SIM



- It provides a measure of moderate to vigorous PA (MVPA) related to leisure or transport
- The SIM is suitable for use for the following purposes:
 - Measuring MVPA at a single time point (compares favourably with longer self-report measures).^{3,4}
 - Evaluating change in MVPA (e.g. administer before and after participation in community programs).⁴
 - When time is limited (easy to administer as part of the registration process in community settings).
 - Promotion of PA data harmonisation by including in larger public health surveys of multiple health indicators (e.g. PA, healthy eating, mental health, etc.).
 - When we want to reduce the burden on participants.

Limitations of the SIM



- The SIM is NOT suitable for the following purposes:
 - Assessing adherence to current Australian PA Adult guidelines.
 - Measuring PA levels of children, youth (there is a youth version of the SIM⁵) or older adults.
 - When there is a need to measure PA in relation to housework or duties performed as part of work.
 - When there is a need to assess types of activities undertaken.



References

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