

# Victorians' physical activity across life stages

## Insights to engage Victorians in physical activity at different life stages

Being regularly active is important for our health and wellbeing. In order to engage more Victorians to become more active, we need to better understand their attitudes and motivations to physical activity, as well as key influences and barriers – particularly for those who are less active.

In 2015, VicHealth commissioned research to identify key segments of Victorians based on their levels and type of physical activity. This research involved online surveys of 3145 Victorians aged 12 and over across Victoria, as well as focus groups with Victorian adults aged 18 and over.

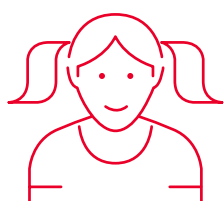
The research resulted in five distinct 'life stages' for which there are common themes and unique attributes that influence physical activity behaviour. Within each life stage, sub-groups were identified based on their physical activity levels and their likelihood to respond to programs and communications encouraging them to be more active.

Some enablers and barriers to physical activity are common to all life stages. But to increase the success of strategies to increase activity, consider the sub-groups and what influences their attitudes and motivations, and the level of personal or external support available.

Strategies must also consider the awareness and availability of physical activity options to the sub-group and what and how to communicate with them.

A snapshot of each life stage can be viewed at [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/lifestages](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/lifestages)

### The five life stages identified are:



Youth (12–17)



Young adults  
(18–24)



Adults (25+)  
with no children



Parents



Retirees

## Findings common to all of the life stages



### Knowing is not enough

Victorians know the health benefits of physical activity but that knowledge is often not compelling enough to get them to be active, particularly for those who are inactive. Somewhat active and active adults said they need to 'experience' the benefits in order to believe them and convince them to be regularly active.



### Adding one more session feels possible

Most Victorians believe that adding one more 30-minute session of activity to their week is entirely possible. Adding 'just one more' session per week was considered achievable as part of the daily 'like to do' agenda after completing the 'must do' list.



### It runs in the family

Active adults often come from active families. An active childhood is strongly linked to being an active adult, setting up habits for being regularly active as part of the daily routine. In addition, there is a clear link between the behaviours and attitudes of parents and their children.



### A little bit of activity is self-reinforcing

Experiencing the benefits of physical activity, even in small amounts (30 minutes), usually leads to a desire to do the same amount again, or more.



### Winter is a major barrier

Winter is both a physical and psychological barrier to being active outdoors, or before and after work. More Victorian adults are likely to be physically active during the warmer months. The impact of the weather is particularly pronounced for those who do walking as their main form of activity.



### Weekly routine is critical

A weekly routine is a form of pre-commitment and is critical to achieving regular, sustained engagement in physical activity. Active adults recognise the link between a good routine and increased physical activity. Less active adults are less likely to have experienced this.



### Having physical activity in the daily 'must do' list gives it importance

Less active and inactive Victorians do not place physical activity on their daily agenda often enough, or at all. Often, other items or activities in the daily agenda are prioritised and perceived to be more important, such as work, picking up children or preparing dinner. Forms of physical activity that meet emotional needs are more likely to be prioritised as 'nice to do' or 'must do' within the daily or weekly routine.



### Life or routine changes are triggers to increase physical activity

Opportunities to increase physical activity are often linked to a change in routine, life moment, or when Victorians are reflecting on their life, e.g. moving house, relationship changes, the birth of a child, a new job, illness or trauma.



### Workplaces have a key role

Workplaces offer a unique opportunity to encourage and normalise physical activity among their staff, for example through the provision of facilities, subsidies, and time and opportunities to be active before and after work, or during lunch break.

## The life stages



### YOUTH (12–17)

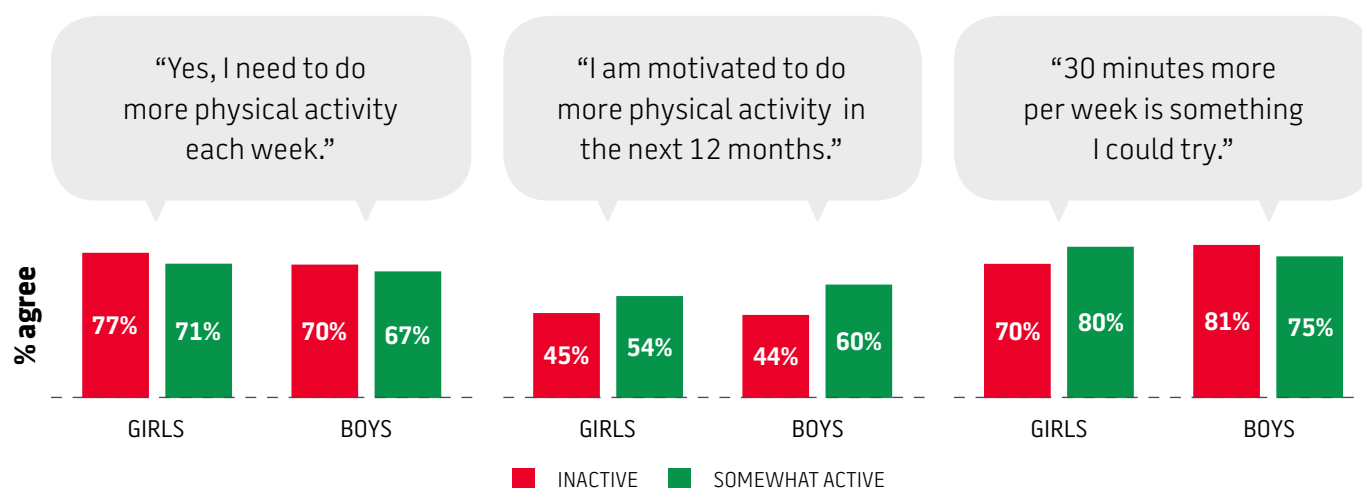
Youth is a period of massive changes, encompassing the transition from primary school to secondary school and then childhood to adulthood. These include physical, mental, social and intellectual changes, at the same time as becoming increasingly independent.

### Youth activity levels



'Inactive' = no days of 60-minute sessions of physical activity per week; 'Somewhat active' = 1 to 3 days of 60-minute sessions per week; 'Active' = 4+ days of 60-minute sessions per week.

### Are less active youth ready to do more physical activity?



### Among all Victorian youth:





## YOUNG ADULTS (18–24)

Young adults are undergoing a period of significant change in their lives, with many completing secondary school and going on to tertiary study or trade qualifications, starting work and forging a career, moving out of home and starting serious relationships. They are exploring a new-found sense of independence and freedom, which can be both exciting and daunting.

### Young adults' activity levels



'Inactive' = no days of 30-minute sessions of physical activity per week; 'Somewhat active' = 1 to 3 days of 30-minute sessions per week; 'Active' = 4+ days of 30-minute sessions per week.

### Are less active young adults ready to do more physical activity?



In this chart, 'inactive' and 'somewhat active' have been grouped together as 'less active'. Less active young Victorians do 0–3 days of 30 minute sessions of physical activity per week.

### Among all Victorian adults:

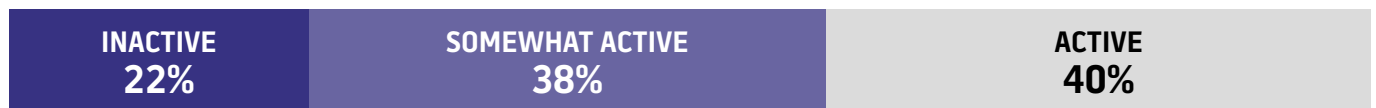
**3%** are less active young people



## ADULTS (25+) WITH NO CHILDREN

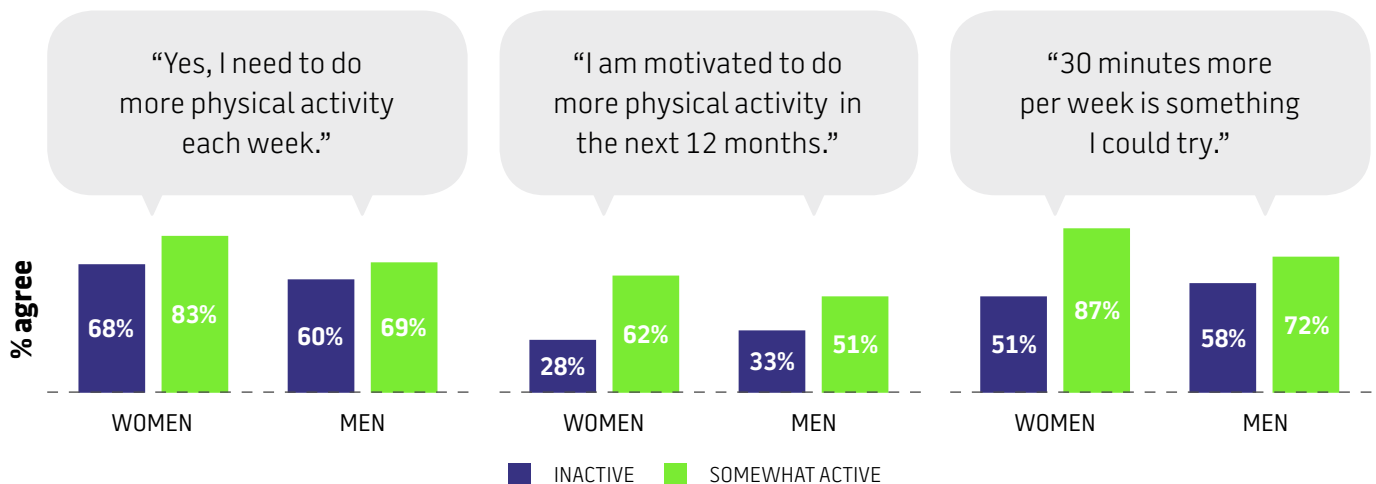
This life stage is broad, comprising all Victorian adults over the age of 25 years who are not parents of dependent children or retired. This diverse group shares characteristics such as increased emotional and financial stability (compared with younger adults) and the freedom to make more deliberate choices about their lifestyle. Many are in a period of consolidation of career and financial aspirations, either to set themselves up initially, or in preparation for retirement.

### Adults with no children's activity levels



'Inactive' = no days of 30-minute sessions of physical activity per week; 'Somewhat active' = 1 to 3 days of 30-minute sessions per week; 'Active' = 4+ days of 30-minute sessions per week.

### Are less active adults with no children ready to do more physical activity?



### Among all Victorian adults:





## PARENTS

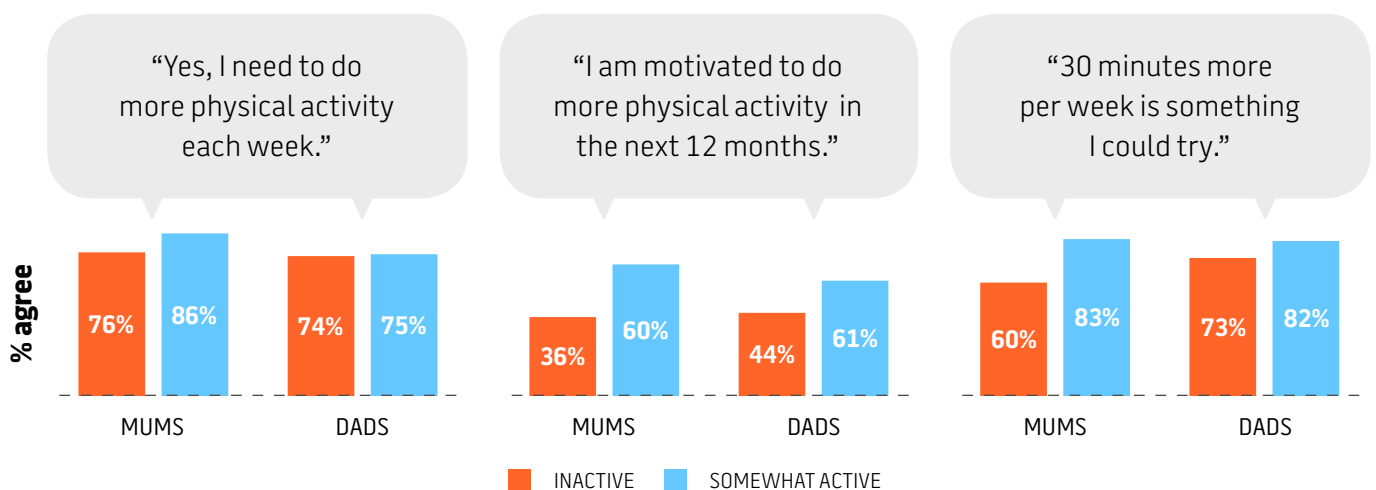
Parenthood is a life stage characterised by 'busy-ness'. A focus on child-raising combined with multiple, competing priorities leads to reduced 'free' time, which becomes a highly valued commodity.

### Parents' activity levels



'Inactive' = no days of 30-minute sessions of physical activity per week; 'Somewhat active' = 1 to 3 days of 30-minute sessions per week; 'Active' = 4+ days of 30-minute sessions per week.

### Are less active parents ready to do more physical activity?



### Among all Victorian adults:

**3%** are inactive mums

**2%** are inactive dads

**6%** are somewhat active mums

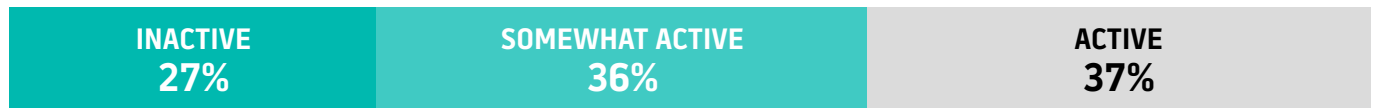
**5%** are somewhat active dads



## RETIREEES

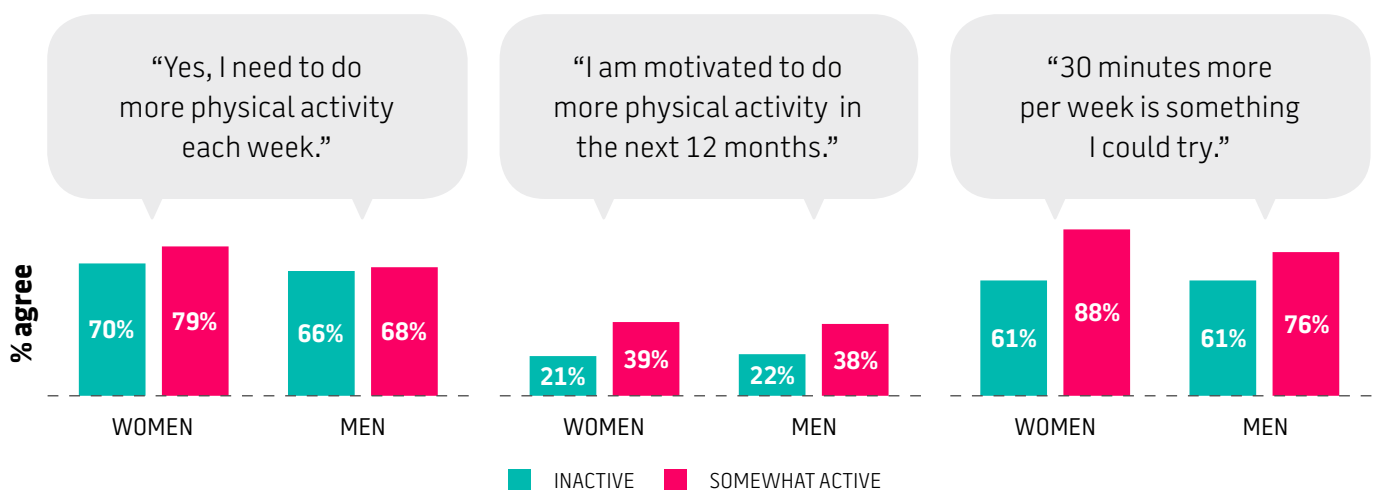
For many, retirement is a time of new-found freedom. Those who are newly retired experience a sense of reward and entitlement to 'down tools', relax and enjoy life. While many embrace the lack of structure or pressure in their day, this life stage can coincide with new responsibilities of caring for ageing parents and the arrival of grandchildren.

### Retirees' activity levels



'Inactive' = no days of 30-minute sessions of physical activity per week; 'Somewhat active' = 1 to 3 days of 30-minute sessions per week; 'Active' = 4+ days of 30-minute sessions per week.

### Are less active retirees ready to do more physical activity?



### Among all Victorian adults:



Victorian Health Promotion Foundation  
PO Box 154 Carlton South  
Victoria 3053 Australia  
T +61 3 9667 1333 F +61 3 9667 1375

[vichealth@vichealth.vic.gov.au](mailto:vichealth@vichealth.vic.gov.au)  
[vichealth.vic.gov.au](http://vichealth.vic.gov.au)



VicHealth acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



© VicHealth 2017  
January 2017 P-PA-463