

JUNE 15 2010

# Caught in the Time Crunch:

Time Use, Leisure and Culture in Canada

A REPORT OF THE CANADIAN INDEX OF WELLBEING (CIW)

The logo features a stylized lowercase 'i' in green with a thin green line extending from its top right, curving upwards and then downwards to underline the word 'index'. The word 'index' is in a black, lowercase, sans-serif font. Above 'index' is the word 'CANADIAN' in a smaller, uppercase, black, sans-serif font. Below 'index' is the phrase 'OF WELLBEING' in a black, uppercase, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the logo is the tagline 'Measuring what matters' in a small, italicized, black, sans-serif font.  
CANADIAN  
**index**  
OF WELLBEING  
*Measuring what matters*

## **The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW)**

The CIW is a new way of measuring wellbeing. It provides unique insights into the quality of life of Canadians – overall, and in specific areas that matter: our standard of living, our health, the quality of our environment, our education and skill levels, the way we use our time, the vitality of our communities, our participation in the democratic process, and the state of our leisure and culture.

The CIW is based on the understanding that a true measure of national wellbeing must link the economic, health, social, cultural, and environmental realities of Canada, its people and the communities in which they live. By doing so, it can go beyond conventional silos and connect the dots among the many factors that shape our quality of life.

The report that follows presents a summary and highlights of research studies in two inter-related quality of life categories:

- Time Use; and
- Leisure and Culture.

Later this year, the CIW will release reports on Education and the Environment. It will also issue its first composite index – with a single number that moves up or down like the TSX or Dow Jones Industrial, giving a quick snapshot of whether the overall quality of life of Canadians is getting better or worse; and whether we are making progress or moving further away from our vision of wellbeing.

## **Other Publications**

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing was launched on June 10, 2009. A number of reports have since been released:

- How are Canadians *Really* Doing? The First Report of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (reporting on Living Standards, Healthy Populations, and Community Vitality);
- How are Canadians *Really* Doing? A Closer Look at Select Groups;
- The Economic Crisis Through the Lens of Economic Wellbeing; and
- Democratic Engagement.

User-friendly report highlights, full research studies, and additional information about the CIW are available online at [www.ciw.ca](http://www.ciw.ca).

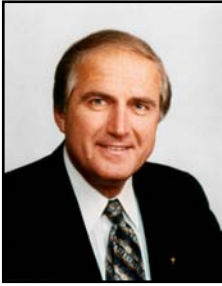
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Chair, Canadian Index of Wellbeing Advisory Board

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## Preface



### **Caught in the Time Crunch**

by the Honourable Roy J. Romanow, P.C., O.C., S.O.M., Q.C.  
Chair, Canadian Index of Wellbeing Advisory Board

Not so long ago we dared to imagine a shift to the leisure society – a world where robots lifted the burden of work, and prosperity allowed more time for stimulating activities and fun.

Today's reality is starkly different than yesterday's dream. Technology does play a major role in our lives – for better and for worse – and it comes in a more sophisticated form than robots. Computers, Blackberries, iPhones, social networking...along with other transformational forces like globalization, climate change, new family structures...all have changed the way we live, work and play. They've also changed the way we interact – and the time we have to interact – with our families, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and communities.

The world has evolved rapidly and Canada has changed along with it. This report by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing looks at the last 15-20 years of time use, leisure and culture trends in Canada. It finds Canadians caught in a time crunch, struggling to meet the competing demands of: a workplace that can reach out to them 24/7; children and parents who need a supportive environment; and their own needs to refresh body and mind through family time, leisure and culture activities.

More and more Canadians are working in jobs requiring non-standard hours – weekends, evenings, nights, and rotating shifts. More Canadians are providing care to dependent seniors. Women, especially, are feeling the pressure. They take on the lion's share of raising children and providing care to seniors.

Adolescents are increasingly exceeding recommended times for TV and video games. Meanwhile, the portion of parents reading to pre-school children and kids participating in organized activities appear to be in a holding pattern. On the other end of the age scale, the proportion of retired seniors engaged in active leisure activities has remained steady and more seniors are volunteering in their community.

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Caught in the time crunch, Canadians are finding less and less time to be physically and socially engaged in activities. We are more likely to rely on TV for entertainment than go out to a play or movie, play some pick-up hockey or take a walk in the park. Fewer of us are finding the time to visit National Parks and National Historic Sites.

Fewer of us are volunteering for culture and recreation organizations. Those who do are putting in fewer hours. The number of performances and attendance at performing arts have both dropped. Yet, household spending on culture and recreation is increasing, which suggests that these activities are becoming more costly – at least for those who can afford them.

Government support for leisure and culture opportunities and facilities have not kept pace with higher costs and a growing diverse population. There has been an ongoing shift away from core funding for public agencies, non-profit and voluntary organizations that are responsible for supporting leisure and culture in Canadian communities.

As individuals and as a society, we are paying a steep price for this time crunch. We're less healthy, both physically and mentally. We have less time for personal pleasures. And we're more dissatisfied with the quality of our lives.

Some groups of Canadians – defined by race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, dis/ability, gender, sexual orientation and language proficiency – experience systemic barriers that further compromise time use patterns and limit participation in leisure and health enhancing activities.

While the world will continue to change, there is nothing inevitable or unavoidable about a society caught in a time crunch. It requires nothing more than imaginative ideas and responsive public policy.

Now, more than ever, we need family-friendly policies for all workers and supports for seniors. It's time to modernize Canada's work and social policies. Family-friendly work policies would include more flex time, job sharing, better parental and eldercare leave benefits, better vacation benefits, and a shorter work week. With the trend toward

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We must be especially mindful of ensuring equity and inclusion are overarching principles in our approach to time use, culture and leisure.

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non-standard work hours increasing, it's all the more important that our governments upgrade employment standards to ensure workers' health and safety.

Now, more than ever, we need governments and public policies that support our culture and leisure infrastructure. Arts, culture and recreation activities are vital to our wellbeing. We must continue to develop meaningful venues and opportunities. And we must be especially mindful of ensuring equity and inclusion are overarching principles in our approach to time use, culture and leisure. In this respect, more research is needed to 'unpack' national trends so we understand patterns of time use and address barriers to culturally relevant and meaningful leisure opportunities that will contribute to individual belonging and community cohesion and connectedness.

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Now more than ever we need family-friendly policies for all workers and supports for seniors. It's time to modernize Canada's work and social policies.

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We must meet the needs of all Canada's children and their families. Better community programs are just one of the solutions that can help keep all generations of Canadians physically, socially, and intellectually engaged. The independence of seniors, for example, can be improved by services such as transportation, recreation, social outreach, drop-in and day programs, health promotion, personal care, and supportive housing.

We also have to recognize the strong link between the quality of the communities we build and the quality of our lives. We have to tackle challenges like urban sprawl and the toll it takes on our time and our environment. Better infrastructure, more public transit options, and walkable neighbourhoods would make for better communities and address some of the time crunch Canadians face today.

It's time we had a national dialogue – a dialogue about how we can lead more balanced lives. We need to make room in our lives for both our obligations and our human needs. And that means lives that

satisfy and enrich, not just for some of us, but for all of us. It's time we enjoyed the kind of personal fulfillment and leisure that Canadians once dared to imagine was possible for ourselves and for future generations.

The Honourable Roy J. Romanow, P.C., O.C., S.O.M., Q.C.  
Chair, Canadian Index of Wellbeing Advisory Board

## I. Introduction: New Times, New Pressures

Canadians perceive and spend time much differently than they once did. Today's realities reflect changes that have taken place in family structure, workplace characteristics, and broader society. Among the major trends that are reshaping time use, leisure and culture activities are:

- **A greater demand by consumers for services in the evenings, weekends and holidays.** This demand has been met by increasingly loose government regulations (e.g., opening hours for retailers on Sunday). As a result, a higher proportion of adults are working non-standard hours. There has also been an increase in the proportion of working adults engaged in precarious work (e.g., temporary contracts with limited or no employee benefits, job insecurity, short tenure, and low wages) particularly women, immigrants and racialized people.
- **A lack of comprehensive childcare support for many Canadians.** Despite the growth of two income families, childcare is not completely accessible and affordable to all Canadians. In addition, the increase in employees working non-standard hours suggests the need for more flexibility in the hours of operation of childcare facilities. In 2008, only 18% of Canadian children aged 0 to 3 years were enrolled in regular childcare, less than half the proportion in many northern European countries.
- **An increase in urban sprawl.** Working adults are spending more time commuting between work and home, diminishing not only their own wellbeing but that of their families.
- **Greater innovation and adaptation of workplace technologies.** The introduction of new technologies such as laptops, Blackberries, iPhones, email, etc. has increased the demand for workers to be perpetually "on call", erasing the boundaries between workplace and home.
- **An increase in passive activities among children and adolescents.** Screen time (TV, computers and video games) among children and adolescents is estimated to exceed recommended maximums. By contrast, approximately 90% of Canadian children and adolescents are not meeting the recommended physical activity guidelines. Children living in poverty, with disabilities, or living in neighbourhoods where activity is restricted by climate, safety concerns, lack of facilities, or shortage of money are most at risk for low activity levels.

- **An aging population.** Canadians are living longer than ever. In 2005, people 65 years of age and over made up 13% of the Canadian population. By 2026 this proportion is expected to increase to 22%. Life expectancy has increased dramatically from less than 50 years at the beginning of the previous century to 80 years in 2004. That's the good news, as is the growing desire for maintaining independent living. The bad news is that the increase in the relative number of seniors has not been met by an increase in neighbourhood and community supports for seniors. In their absence, families are assuming an increase in caregiving responsibilities.
- **Leisure and culture activities are becoming more expensive.** Canadian families are participating less frequently in these kinds of activities, but spending more money on them. Whether it's tickets to a hockey game or the opera, the cost of participating in formal leisure and culture activities has shot up faster than inflation. Meanwhile, governments are introducing new or higher fees for using public recreation space, further reducing the accessibility of these important venues to Canadians.

As part of its mission to report to Canadians on the way changing societal trends are reshaping their quality of life, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing has commissioned major research studies on Time Use and on Leisure and Culture. Sections 2 and 3 of this report present **summaries and highlights** of the studies. Section 4, **Connecting the Dots**, looks at how time use, leisure and culture are linked to wellbeing and at a number of common threads connecting the various wellbeing categories ("Domains"). Section 5, **Ideas for Positive Change**, begins the dialogue on how Canadians can enjoy balanced lives that include more time for leisure and culture activities.

The two studies are available in full on our website at [www.ciw.ca](http://www.ciw.ca).



## 2. Time Use Domain – Summary and Highlights

The way in which people use and experience time has a significant impact on their wellbeing and that of their community. This includes physical and mental wellbeing, individual and family wellbeing, and present and future wellbeing. The impact may be positive or negative.

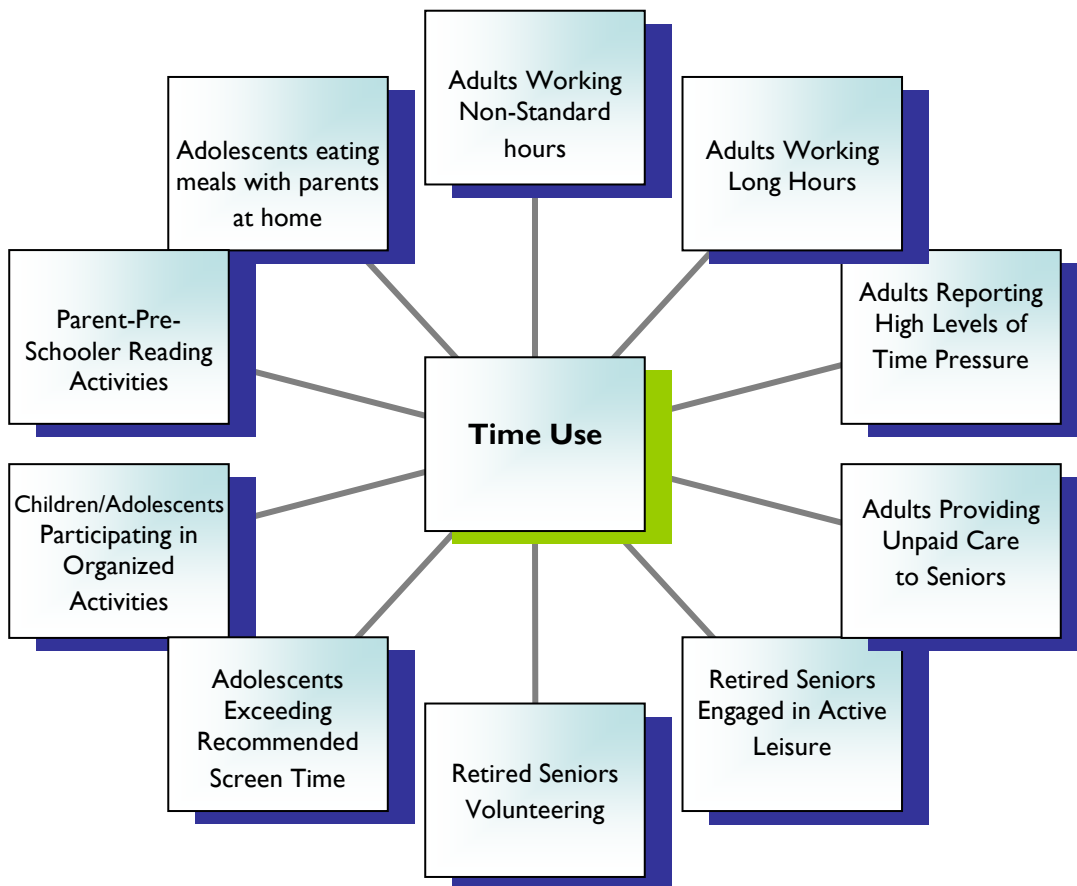
The Time Use Domain of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing measures the use of time, how people experience it, what controls its use, and how it affects wellbeing. The implicit assumption is the notion of *balance*. Most activities are beneficial to wellbeing when done in moderation, but are detrimental when done excessively. Given the finite number of hours in a day, excessive amounts of time directed towards one activity can mean insufficient amounts of time for other activities that are also critical for wellbeing.

The Time Use Domain takes an “ages and stages” approach. It recognizes that individuals of different ages and life stages display different patterns of time use. Most pre-school children, for example, spend almost their entire day in unstructured learning play; school-aged children and adolescents spend more time in educational and other structured activities; adults spend many of their waking hours in the paid labour force and childcaring activities; while seniors spend greater amounts of time in leisure activities and in health maintenance. For this reason, the Report provides separate indicators for:

- Children and Adolescents;
- Working-age Adults; and
- Retired Seniors.

More specifically, the Time Use Domain tracks 10 indicators:

## The Time Use Model



## Trends

- Fewer Canadians are working long hours, but more are working non-standard hours.
- More people are feeling caught in a 'time crunch'.
- More Canadians – especially women – are providing care to seniors.
- The percentage of children and adolescents participating in organized, extra-curricular activities has stayed the same.
- Adolescents are increasingly exceeding recommended times for TV, video games and computer use. Significantly fewer are having meals at home with parents.
- The percentage of parents reading to pre-school children has remained stable.

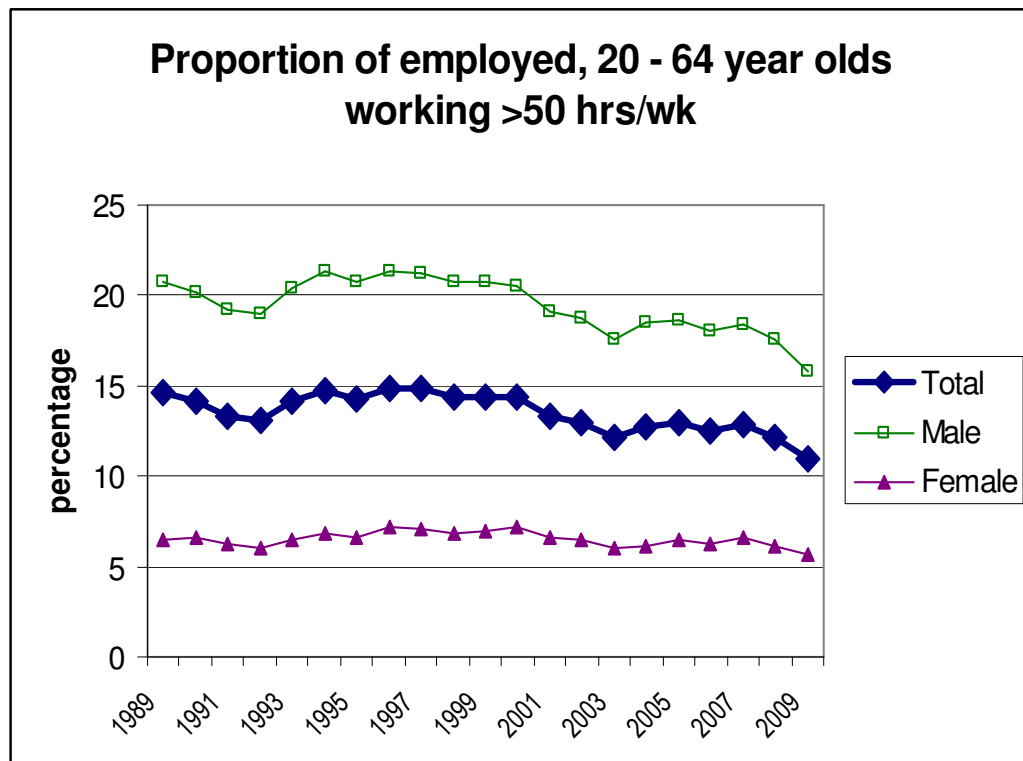
- The percentage of retired adults 65 years of age and over engaged in active leisure has remained stable.
- Substantially more seniors are volunteering.

## Report Highlights

The following are the key highlights of the report:

### Fewer of us are Working Long Hours

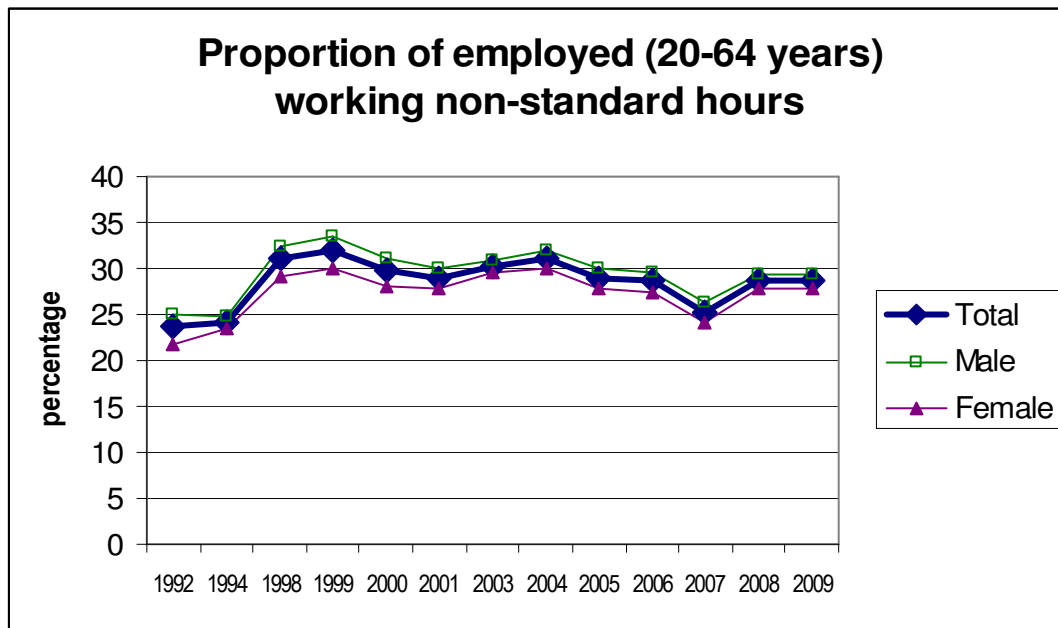
- The proportion of Canadians working more than 50 hours a week declined from a high of 14.9% in 1996 to 11.0% in 2009.
- Males (15.8%) were almost three times as likely as females (5.7%) to work long hours in 2009.



Source: Labour force Survey, Statistics Canada, custom tabulation G0210\_26\_Tab1.

## More of us are Working Non-Standard Hours

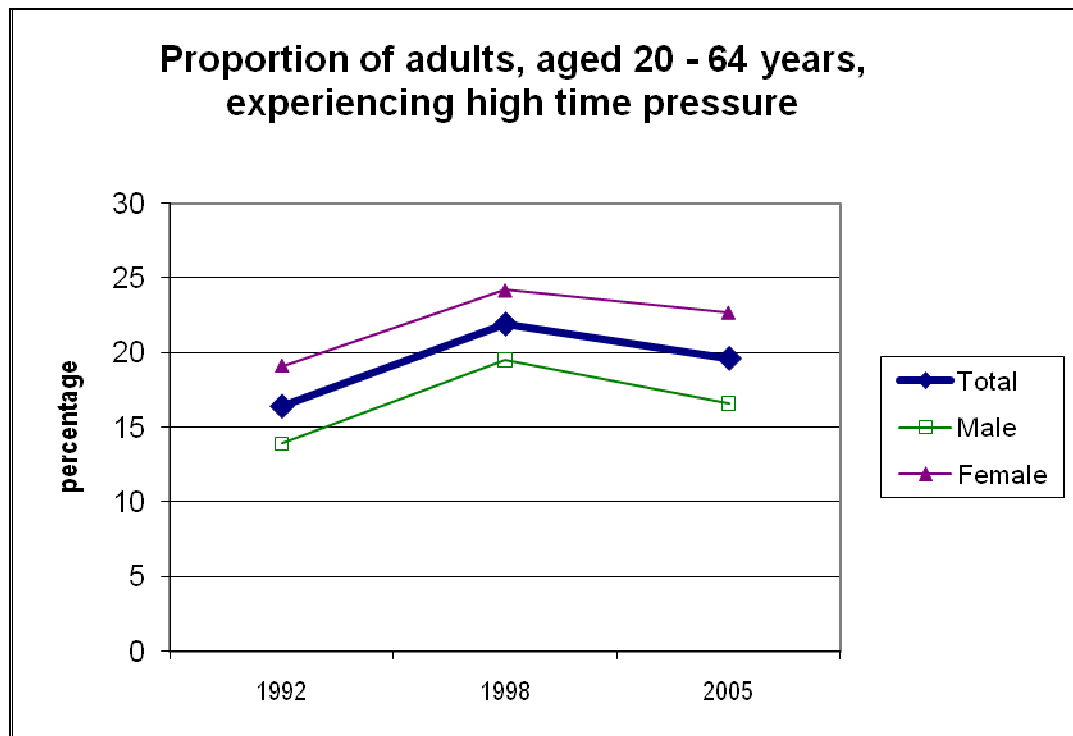
- In 1992, 23% of Canadians worked non-standard hours (weekends, evenings, nights, rotating shifts). By 2009 the proportion jumped to 29%.
- Working non-standard hours (weekends, evenings, nights, rotating shifts) has negative consequences for individual and family wellbeing. These include less contact with spouse/partner and children, worse health outcomes, higher levels of stress, depression and lower life satisfaction.
- The most common types of non-standard schedules were rotating shifts and an irregular schedule. These schedules are the most difficult for workers because the body must adjust to changes in sleep patterns and childcare may be hard to find.



Source: General social survey, Statistics Canada, 1992, 1994, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, public use files. General social survey on Social engagement, 2009, public use microdata files.

## More People are Suffering from a 'Time Crunch'

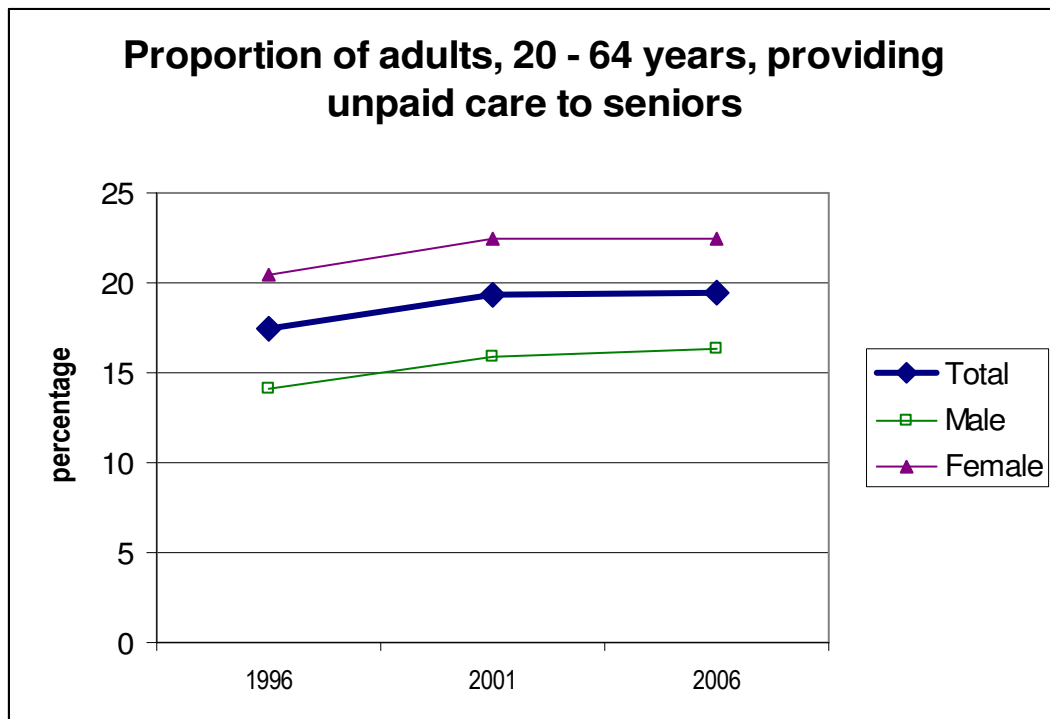
- The proportion of males and females experiencing high levels of 'time crunch' grew from 16.4% in 1992 to 19.6% in 2005.
- The most time-crunched group was single individuals with young children. The least was singles 65 and over.
- A higher proportion of females (22.7%) than males (16.6%) reported time pressure in 2005.



Source: General social survey on Time Use, Statistics Canada, 1992, 1998, 2005, public use microdata files.

## More Adults – Especially Women – are Providing Care to Seniors

- The proportion of working-age adults providing care to seniors grew from 17.4% in 1996 to 19.5% in 2006.
- A higher proportion of females (22.5%) than males (16.3%) provided care to seniors and for more hours per week in 2006.
- About one in four (27.8%) employed Canadians had responsibilities for the care of an elderly dependent and one in five (16.8%) had responsibility for both childcare and eldercare in 2009. A significant portion (25%) of caregiving to seniors was provided by fellow seniors.



Source: Canadian Population Census, Statistics Canada, 1996, 2001, 2006, public use microdata files.

## No Increase in Children/Adolescents Engaged in Organized, Extracurricular Activities

- The proportion of children and adolescents who participated at least weekly in an organized extracurricular activity was relatively stable from 1996-2007, with about 83% of 6-9-year-olds and 75% of 14-15-year-olds taking part in such activities. Gender differences were not significant.
- The fact that 17-25% of Canadian children and adolescents were not participating regularly in any organized sport or lesson is of considerable concern. Research shows that low income, living in a poor neighbourhood, low parental education, large family size, recent immigration, racialized status, and Aboriginal status are significant determinants of participation. Low household income is one of the strongest determinants of lack of participation.

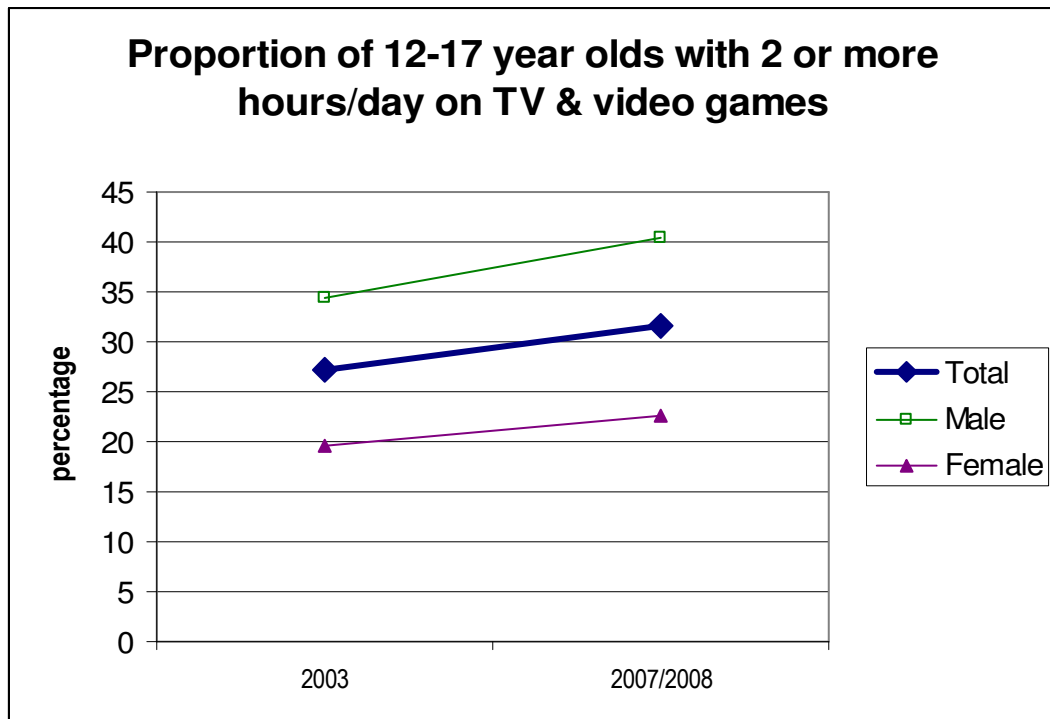
### The proportion of children and adolescents (6-15 yrs old) who participate at least weekly in an organized, extracurricular activity, by gender, 1996/1997 – 2007/2008

Year	6-9 year olds			10-13 year olds			14-15 year olds		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1996-1997	75.7	75.9	75.4	80.4	79.1	81.7			
1998-1999	76.6	76	77.2	81.7	80.9	82.6			
2000-2001	77.1	78.5	75.6	79.2	76.9	81.5	73.9	73.0	74.8
2002-2003				82.2	79.9	84.7	77.0	76.3	77.7
2004-2006				81	79.3	82.6	75.6	75.0	76.2
2006-2007	82.5	82.4	82.7				75.4	74.3	76.6

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, Statistics Canada, 1996-1997, 1998-1999, 2000-2001, 2002-2003, 2004-2006, 2006-2007, custom tabulation.

## Our Children are Spending More Time on TV and Video Games

- The proportion of adolescents who exceeded the maximum recommended 2 hours a day on TV and video games rose from 27.2% in 2003 to 31.7% in 2007/2008.
- When all screen time (TV, computer use, video games), was included, those who exceeded 2 hours a day jumped from 54.5% to 63.7%, with about 70% of boys and 57% of girls exceeding the 2-hour threshold.

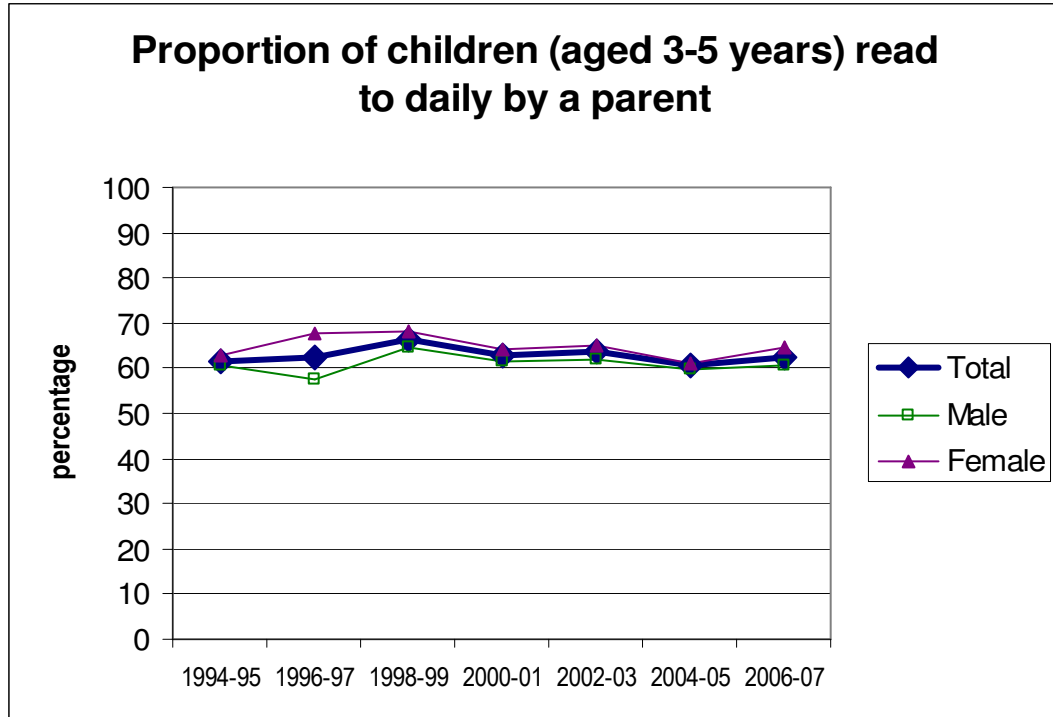


Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, Statistics Canada, 2003, custom tabulation.



## No Significant Increase in Parents Reading to Pre-School Children

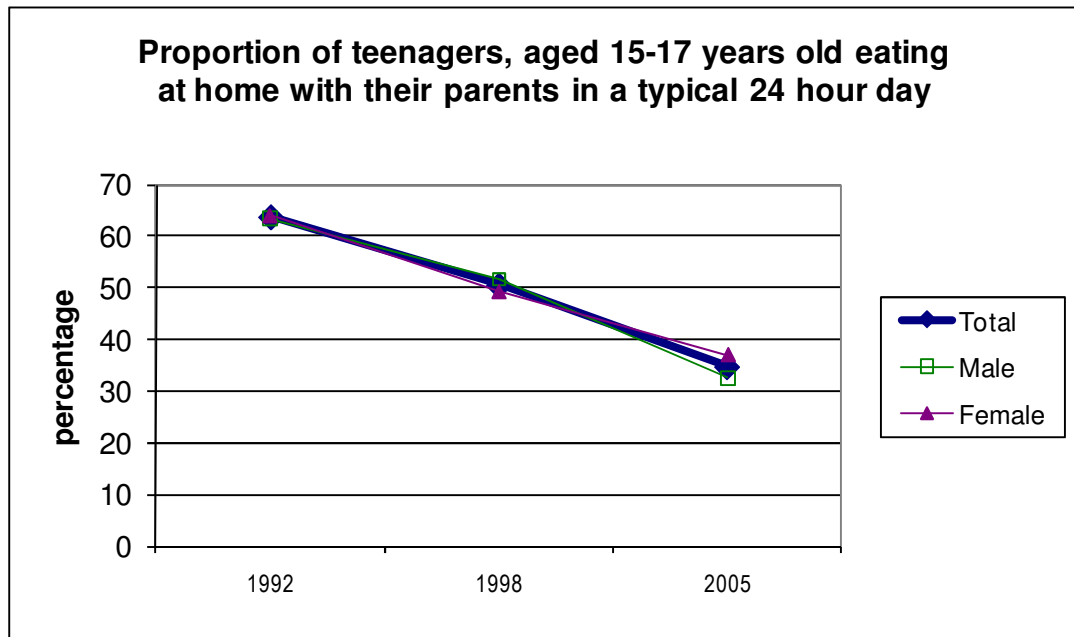
- The proportion of parents who reported reading daily to their pre-school children remains stable at between 60% -66% (1994-2007).



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), Statistics Canada, custom tabulation, for cycles 1-7.

## There has been a Sharp Drop in Teens eating at Home with Parents

- On a typical day in 1992, 63.7% of teenagers aged 15-17 had a meal with their parents. This proportion dropped to 50.5% in 1998 and 34.8% in 2005.
- Most teens did in fact eat at home, but an increasing proportion of them were not eating at the same time as their parents or other adult family members. The likely causes were more parents working non-standard hours, longer commutes, extra-curricular activities interfering with family meal time and parents being too tired at the end of their work day to manage a family meal.



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Time Use, Statistics Canada, 1992, 1998, 2005, public use files. Data are based on 24 hour diary data, but data were sampled from both weekend and week days.

## The Numbers of Seniors Engaged in Active Leisure was Stable

- The proportion of retired seniors engaged in active leisure and their average number of hours remained roughly steady from 1992 to 2005 in the 86%-90% range. Only minor differences were reported by gender.
- The percentage performing cognitive activities like reading and crosswords decreased slightly, as did the percentage involved in social leisure activities, but this was partially offset by an increase in those involved in physical leisure.

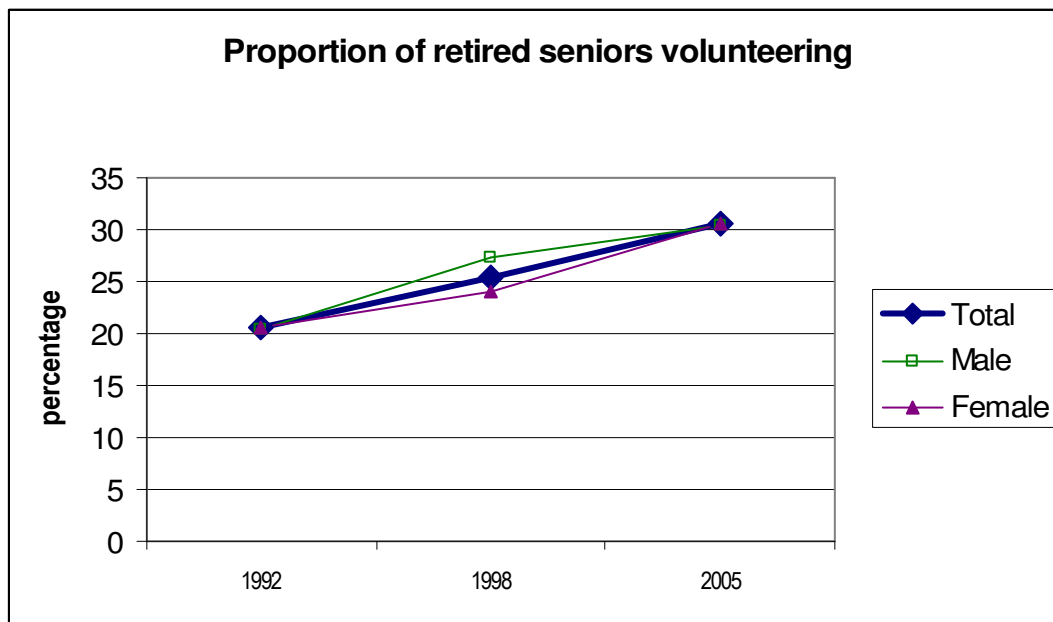
### Proportion of retired seniors engaged in active leisure by type

	1992	1998	2005
Active (physical + cognitive + social)	89.7	89.5	85.7
Cognitive Leisure	71.9	65.6	64.8
Social Leisure	56.5	61.9	50.9
Physical Leisure	28.5	29.3	31.1

Source: General social survey on Time Use, Statistics Canada, 1992, 1998, 2005, public use microdata files.

## Substantially More Seniors are Volunteering

- The percentage of retired seniors participating in formal volunteering activities jumped from 20.5% in 1992 to 30.5% in 2005. Only minor differences were reported by gender.



Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2004 and 2007.

## Conclusion

The way in which Canadians spend their time and their perceptions of time have changed dramatically over the last few decades. While individuals make choices, these choices are often shaped and constrained by their economic, health, social, cultural, and family conditions. These include the social environment in which they live, the workplace environment, the local neighbourhood, and the broader society.

The changing nature of work and workplace is forcing more Canadians to choose less than desirable working conditions. The increasing shift in the service sector to a 24 hour/7 day basis – such as banks offering extended hours or grocery stores open 24 hours/day – has been a big contributor to more people working non-standard hours. Today, there are fewer families who have a parent at home to help manage the household, provide childcare and eldercare. Meanwhile, Canada's aging population has also brought with it a larger need for care. These factors have all contributed to the feeling of time crunch.

With the growing availability and affordability of TV, video games and computers, total screen time is rising to alarming levels. As our society becomes increasingly computerized and communication becomes mediated through technology, it will become increasingly important to support parents in their efforts to limit the screen time of their children and adolescents to acceptable levels.

The substantial drop in the frequency of family meals among teenagers reflects a general trend of parents spending much less time with children 15-17. It is a worrying trend, given that more frequent meals with parents are beneficial for adolescent wellbeing and contribute to healthier eating patterns and lower rates of drug abuse.

A number of positive trends were noted among some populations. The fact that a substantial proportion of parents continue to read daily to their pre-schoolers despite women's increased labour force participation and reliance on early childhood education and care, is positive. And, while the proportion of people who volunteer their time to charities or other non-profit organizations tends to decline with age, an increasing number of seniors are actively engaged in volunteering activities, and this is especially the case among those aged 65 to 74.

It must be pointed out, however, that national trends may mask time-use patterns among population sub-groups. Canadians marginalized by race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, dis/ability, gender, sexual orientation and language proficiency, experience systemic barriers to social and economic opportunity. These barriers directly influence their time use patterns and indirectly affect their exposure to health risks and participation in health-enhancing activities. More research is needed to unpack the national aggregate figures and to identify macro, community, family and individual-level factors that influence time use.

### 3. Leisure and Culture Domain – Summary and Highlights

Participation in leisure and culture activities, whether arts, culture, or recreation, contributes to the wellbeing of individuals, communities, and societies. The myriad of activities and opportunities that we pursue and enjoy today all contribute to our overall life satisfaction and quality of life. They help to fully define our lives, the meaning we derive from them, and ultimately our wellbeing. This is true for all age groups and both genders.

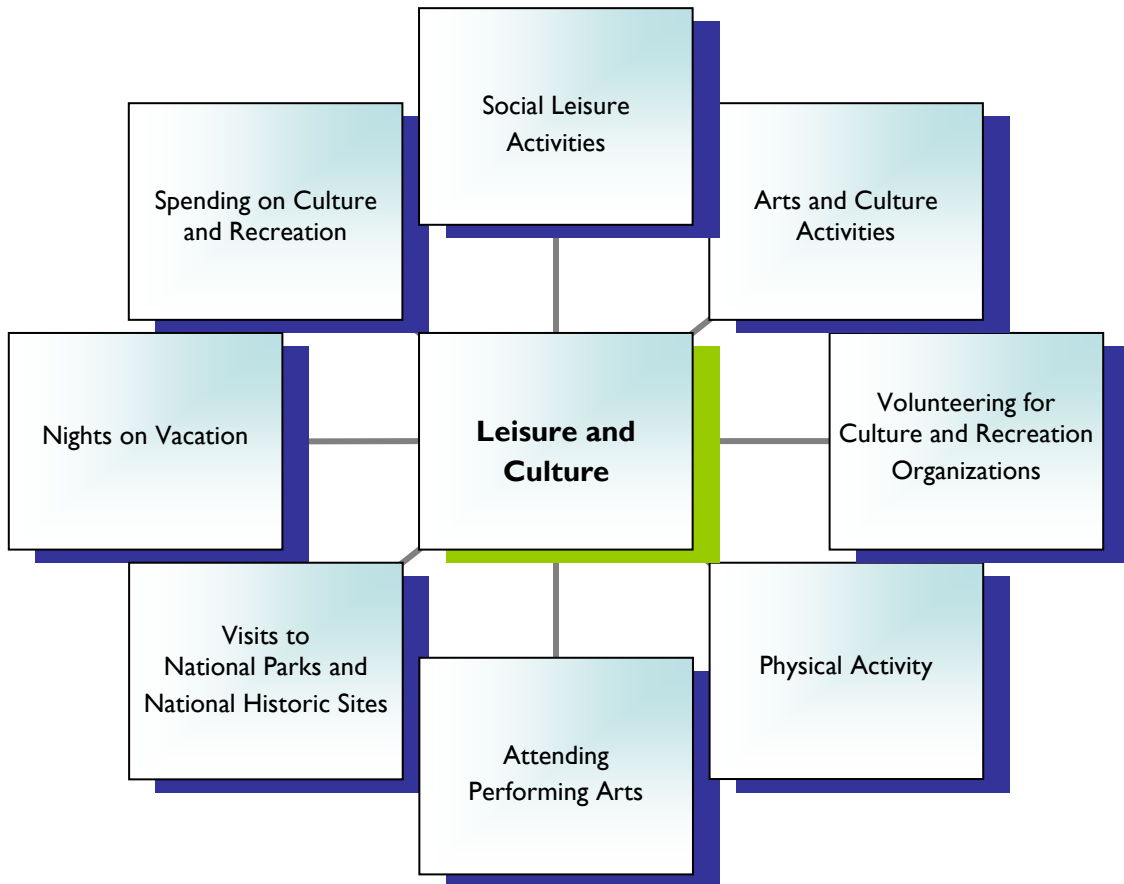
Participation in leisure and culture throughout one's lifetime promotes higher levels of life satisfaction and wellbeing into later life. There is also emerging evidence that leisure and culture can play an even greater role in improving the quality of life for marginalized groups, such as lower income groups, children and older adults living with disabilities, and minority populations.

The wide array of activities, experiences, settings, and stakeholders involved in arts, culture, and recreation are a reflection of the importance of this domain to Canadians. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing's Leisure and Culture category tracks changes in the amount of time and money that Canadians spend on these kinds of activities within two theme areas:

- **Leisure and recreation** – formal and informal, active and passive, including as examples cycling, hockey, fishing, reading for pleasure, playing games, and spending time with family and friends.
- **Arts and culture** – both popular and high culture, including performing arts such as music, dance, and live theatre, visual arts such as painting, drawing and sculpture, media arts such as radio and television, and facilities such as art galleries, museums, and heritage sites.

More specifically, the Leisure and Culture Domain tracks eight indicators:

## The Leisure and Culture Model



## Trends

- Canadians are spending less time on social leisure activities.
- Volunteering for culture and recreation organizations has dropped, especially among those 25 to 34 years of age.
- The number of performances and attendance at performing arts have dropped.
- Participation in physical activities has leveled off.
- Visits to National Parks and National Historic Sites dropped significantly after September 11 and are not expected to rise to levels seen in the 1990s for some time, if at all.
- Household spending on culture and recreation is increasing.

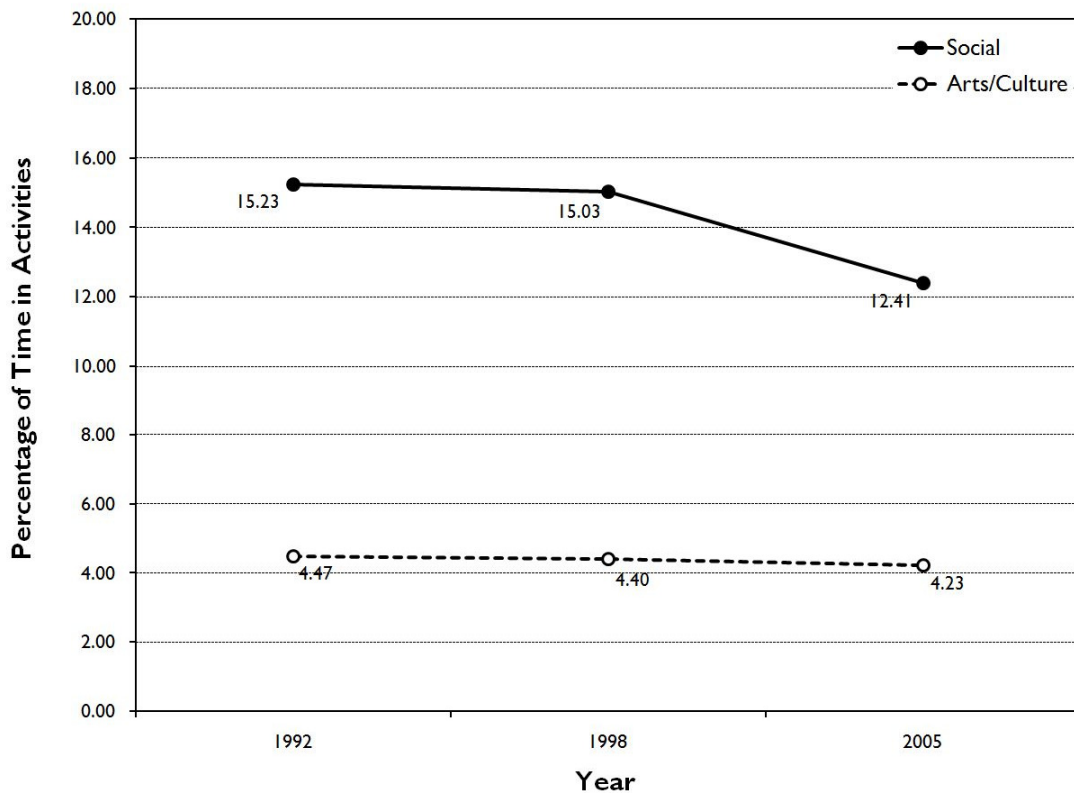
## Report Highlights

The following are the key highlights of the report:

### We are Spending Less Time on Social Leisure Activities

- The average portion of total time that Canadians spent on the previous day on social leisure activities dropped from 15% in 1998 to 12% in 2005. Participation in arts and culture activities remained comparatively stable at less than 5%.
- Women spent a greater percentage of time than men on both social leisure and arts and culture activities, but the drop in social leisure activities from 1998-2005 was greatest among women, from 18% to 14%.
- Adults 65 years and older spent the highest proportion of time on both social leisure and arts and culture activities, in part because they had more free time.

**Percentage of Time Spent in *Social Leisure* and in *Arts and Culture Activities* on the Previous Day (1992 to 2005)**

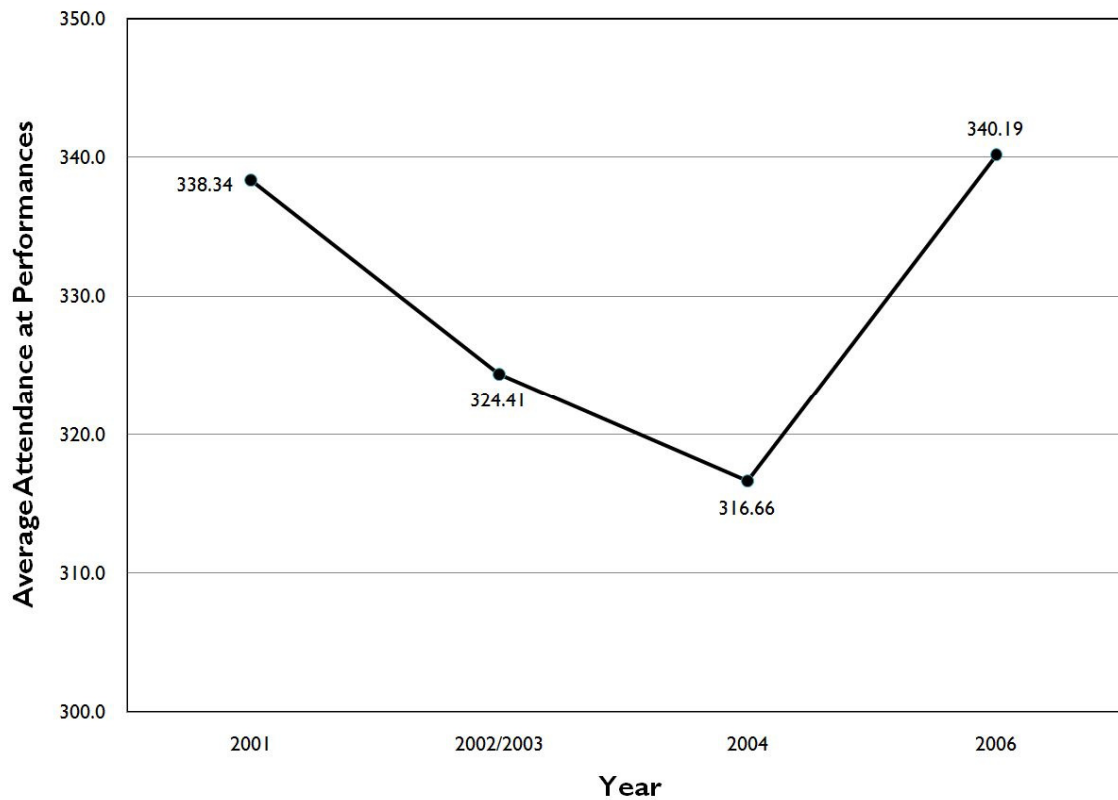


Source: General Social Survey on Time Use (1992, 1998, 2005)

## Arts Performances and Attendance have Dropped

- The number of performances by various theatre, opera, musical and other performing arts companies dropped from 45,000 to under 38,000 and attendance from 15 million to 13 million (2001-2006).
- Average attendance went down steadily from 2001 to 2004, but showed a marked increase in 2006.

### Average Attendance at all Performing Arts Performances (2001 to 2006)



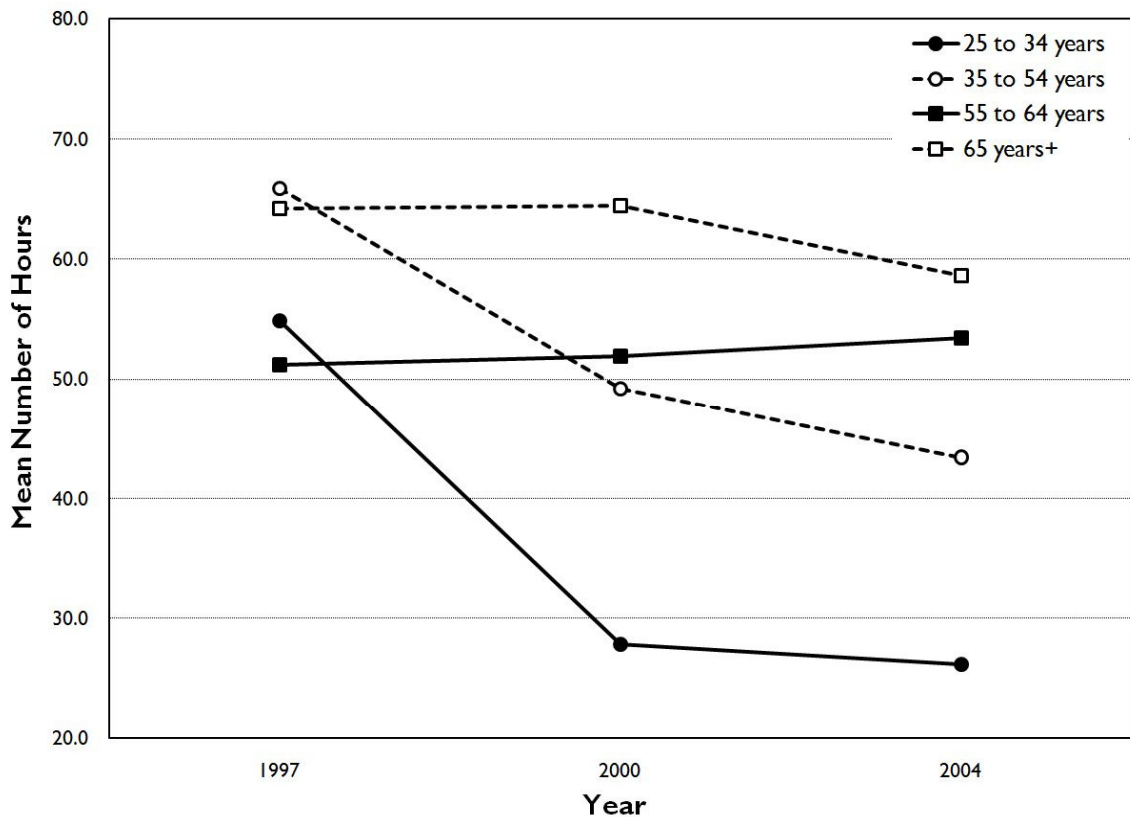
Source: Survey of Service Industries: Performing Arts (2001 to 2006)



## We Volunteer Less for Culture and Recreation Organizations

- Despite the fact that overall volunteering in Canada has increased, the percentage of volunteering time given specifically to culture and recreation organizations dropped dramatically from 32% to 22% (1997-2004).
- The number of hours that Canadians reported volunteering in the previous year for culture and recreation organizations dropped from 46 to 42.
- The drop was greatest among those 25 to 34 years of age, with the average number of hours falling from 55 hours in 1997 to less than half of that in 2004.
- Men reported a significantly greater number of hours and a much greater percentage of their volunteering time given to culture and recreation organizations than did women, though the numbers for both groups dropped.

### Mean Hours Volunteering in the Past Year for Culture and Recreation Organizations by Age Group (1997 to 2004)

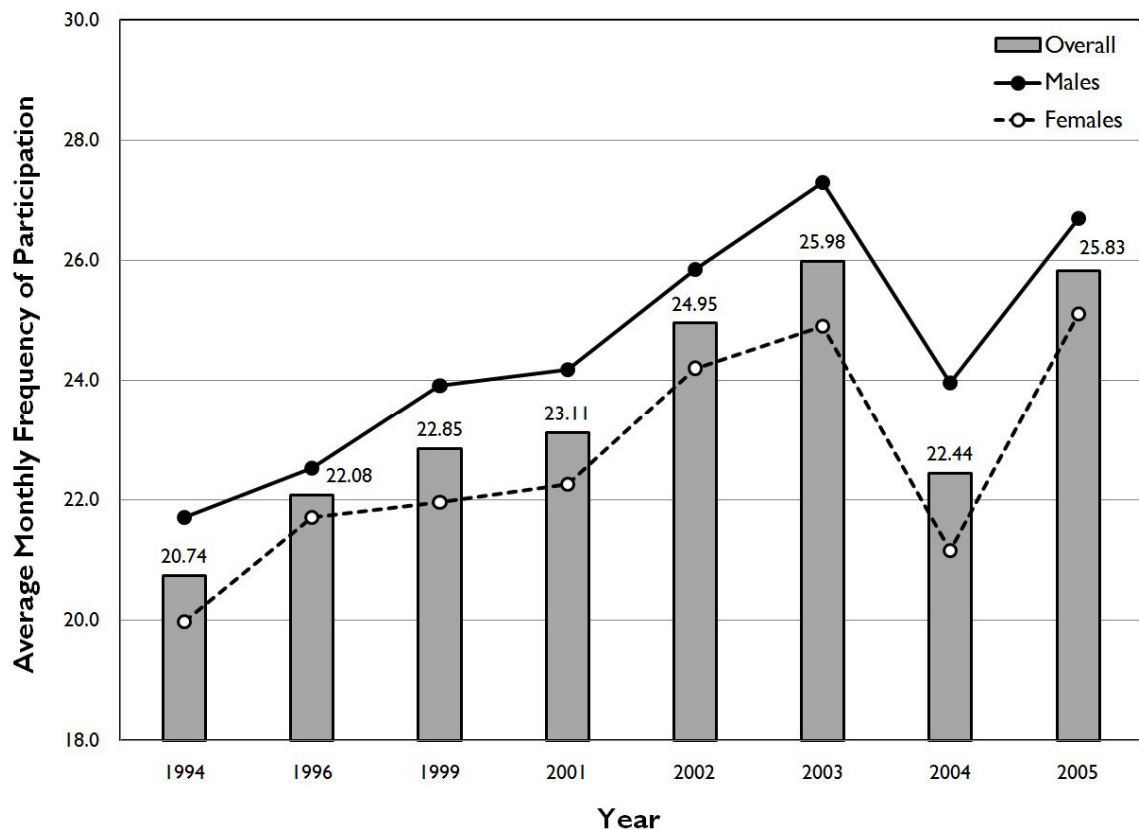


Source: Canadian Survey on Giving, Volunteering, and Participating (1997, 2000, 2004)

## Our Participation in Physical Activities has Levelled off

- Overall participation in physical activity rose steadily from about 21 to 26 times per month (1994-2003), but was still at the same level in 2005. Physical activities measured included walking, bicycling, exercising, various sports, gardening and social dancing.
- Men reported two more episodes of physical activity per month, but the pattern of growth and levelling off was the same for both genders.
- Older adults participated in physical activity at much lower levels than all other age groups. As the population ages, *overall* levels of physical activity among Canadians might begin to decline.

**Average Monthly Frequency of Participation in Physical Activity Overall and by Gender (1994 to 2005)**

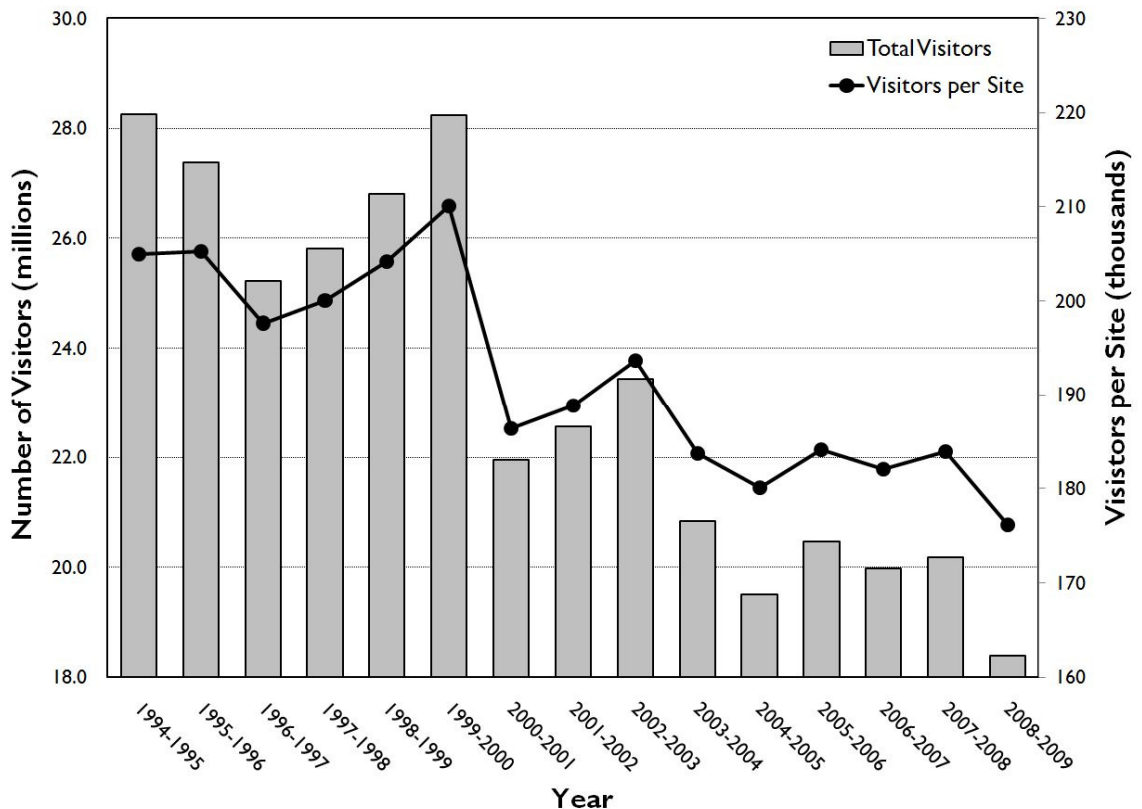


Source: National Population Health Survey (1994 to 1999) and Canadian Community Health Survey (2000 to 2005)

## Visits to National Parks and Historic Sites are far below Pre-9/11 Levels

- Annual visits to National Parks and National Historic Sites of Canada increased steadily throughout the 1990s, but dropped significantly immediately after 9/11 and are still far below pre-9/11 levels. The most recent year for which data are available (2008-2009) showed a further 6% drop. Other contributing factors included the outbreaks of SARS, West Nile virus, and mad cow disease.
- The total number of National Parks and Historic Sites increased from 117 to 127 (1994-2007), but the average number of visitors matched the drop in annual visits.
- The number of visitors is not expected to rise to levels seen in the 1990s for some time, if at all. Recovery to previous levels would require a huge upswing which is not likely to happen given a variety of factors including the introduction of fees and charges and greater restrictions when visiting Parks and Sites.

**Visitation to National Parks and National Historic Sites (1994 to 2009)**

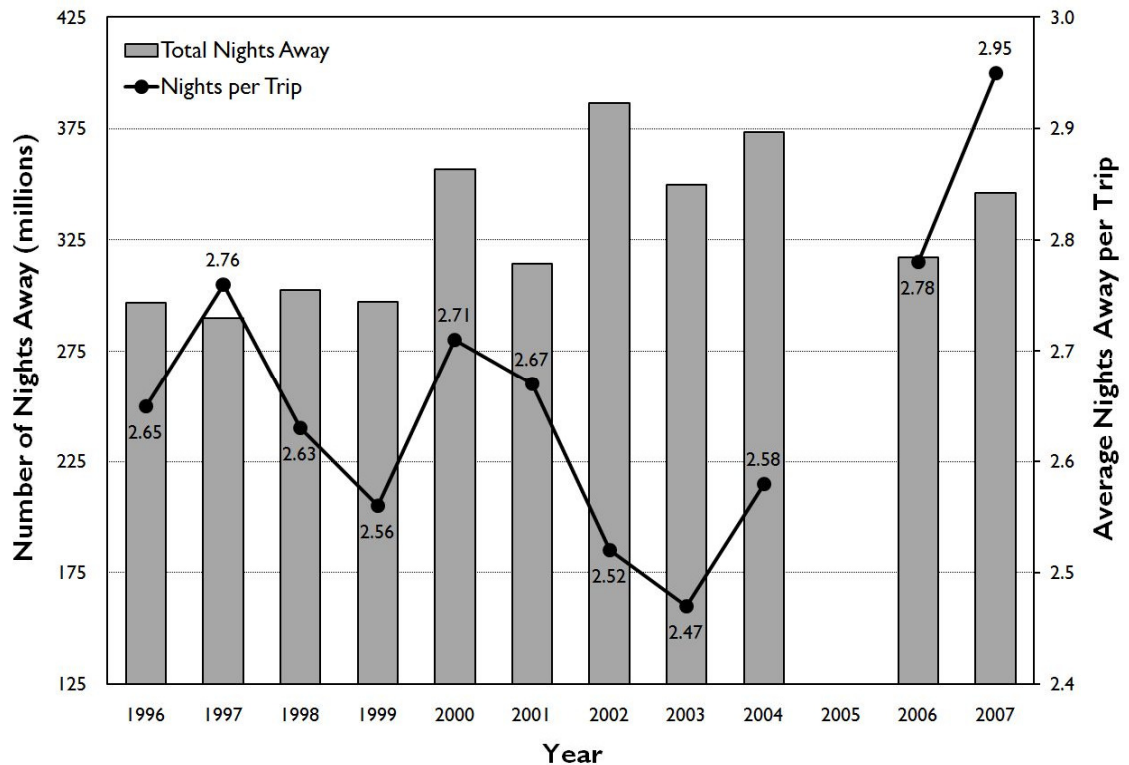


Source: Parks Canada (1994 to 2009)

## We're Taking Slightly Longer Vacations

- The total number of nights Canadians spent away from home was relatively stable in the 1990s. It was generally higher from 2000 to 2007 although the average number of nights away per trip declined until 2003, but has rebounded since 2004. This suggests that while the total number of trips taken by Canadians vary, the trips on average are increasingly longer.
- When women vacationed they spent more nights away than men.
- Adults 65 years and over – most of whom are in retirement – spent significantly more nights away on average than other age groups.

**Total Number of Nights Away on Vacation (1996 to 2007)**

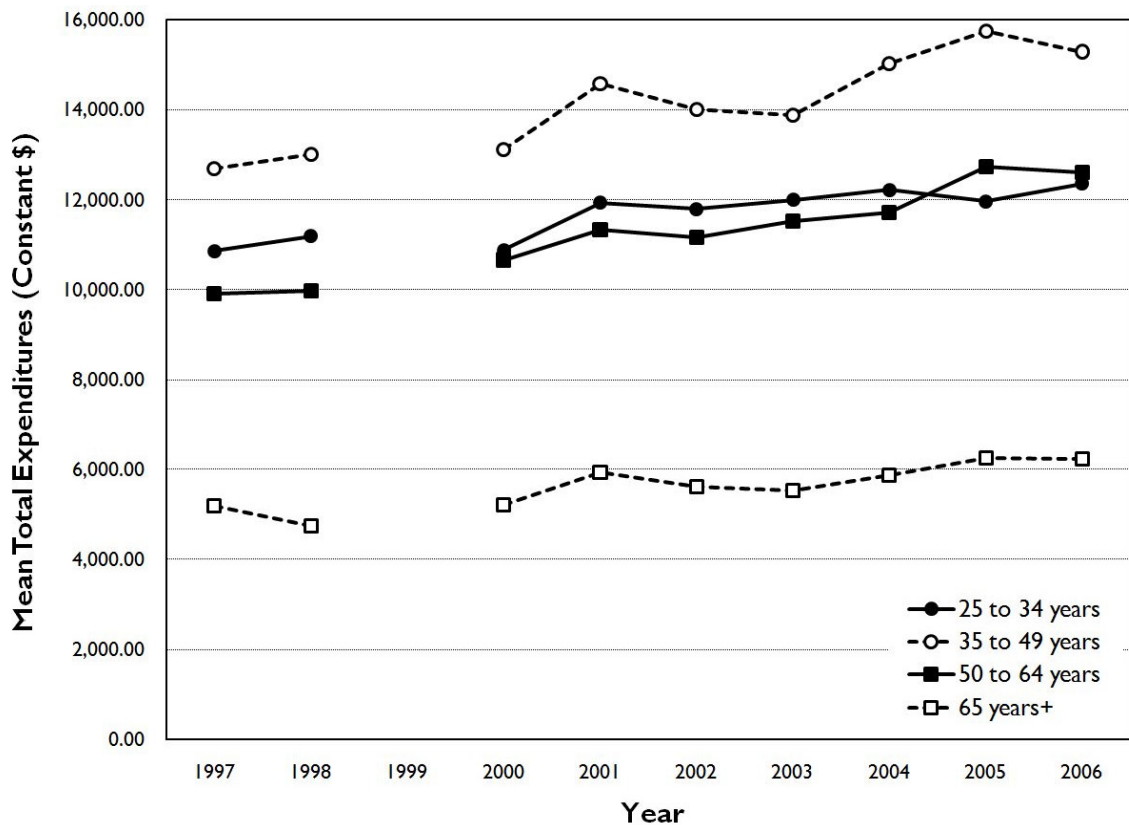


Source: Travel Survey of Residents of Canada (1996 to 2007)

## We're Spending More on Culture and Recreation

- Total annual household expenditures on culture and recreation, even when adjusted for inflation, rose by 20% from \$10,000 in 1997 to \$12,000 in 2006.
- Regardless of whether household income has gone up or down over the years, the percentage of that income spent on culture and recreation has stayed relatively steady at slightly over 21%.
- Mid-aged adults from 35 to 49 years reported spending significantly more on culture and recreation than any other age groups. This may be because they were the ones most likely to have children in the household.
- Adults 65 years of age and older reported spending significantly less on culture and recreation despite having more free time for such activities. This was largely due to their having less disposable income than other age groups.

### Mean Total Household Expenditures on all Aspects of Culture and Recreation by Age Group (1997 to 2006)



Source: Survey of Household Spending (1997 to 2006)

## Conclusion

Leisure and culture make significant contributions to the wellbeing of Canadians and their communities. They also help shape our national identity and sense of who we are as a people. Thus, the overall decline in the engagement of Canadians in such activities is of considerable concern.

The significant drop in leisure activity among women is noteworthy. It may well reflect their increased feeling of time crunch reported upon in the previous section. While there is some comfort in knowing that participation in physical activity has not gone down in recent years for either gender, given the challenge of an aging population and increased chronic diseases such as diabetes and obesity has been called everything from “a ticking time bomb” to “the greatest health challenge facing our generation”, it would be more comforting to see an increase – and a substantial one – in physical activity.

Equally worrying is that over the past several years, public agencies and non-profit, voluntary organizations responsible for the provision of leisure and culture programs, services, facilities, and other opportunities have seen an ongoing shift away from core funding. Indeed, since 1990, community per capita expenditures on recreation and culture have not kept pace with inflation or population increases. This decline in basic operational support represents a serious threat to the ongoing missions of these agencies and organizations, which are mainly responsible for the infrastructure supporting leisure and culture in Canadian communities. It represents a loss of potential to improve the wellbeing of Canadians.

These trends bode poorly for the wellbeing of individuals, community, and society. Should they continue, the benefits associated with having leisure and culture as key components in the lifestyles of Canadians and in our communities will simply not be realized. We must strengthen our capacity to provide meaningful venues and opportunities for leisure and culture.

## 4. Connecting the Dots

### 4.1 The Link to Wellbeing

The CIW research studies on Time Use and Leisure and Culture spotlight the fact that more and more Canadians are caught in a time crunch. The trends suggest that Canadians are increasingly sacrificing satisfying and meaningful relaxation and leisure time in order to attend to the more pressing demands of work, childcare and looking after dependent seniors. There is considerable research demonstrating the strong connection between time use, leisure and culture on the one hand, and wellbeing on the other:

- **Working in the labour force** is strongly and positively associated with individual and family wellbeing. But there is compelling evidence that excessive time spent in paid labour leads to poorer health. The risks are believed to come from having less time to recover from work, longer exposure to workplace hazards, and less time to attend to non-work responsibilities. Long hours have a significantly negative impact on life satisfaction and time-related stress, which in turn, have a negative effect on wellbeing.
- **Non-standard work hours** are associated with lower self-reported health, higher levels of stress, psychological distress, greater depressive symptoms, greater relationship conflict for dual-earner couples, and lower life satisfaction. Evening work is particularly bad for the children of evening workers since the lessened contact reduces the parent's ability to support the child's development and to secure childcare.
- **Workers in precarious employment** have poorer health and experience higher levels of stress, mental illness, and substance abuse. Precarious work also tends to have lower pay than permanent work and often does not offer access to training, paid vacations, paid sick leave, employment insurance, pension and other benefits.
- **Unpaid caregivers for adult family members** are more likely to report poor health, depressive symptoms, and high risk health behaviours. They have less time for leisure activities, report missing more days of work, taking more personal days and retiring earlier to provide care.
- **Long commuting hours** are associated with self and medically reported sickness and absences, sleep problems and elevated risk factors for heart disease. Long commutes also disrupt family life by reducing time together. Car travel is more detrimental to wellbeing than train travel, since in the latter case commuters tend to walk to and from the train station. There is consistent evidence that individuals who use cars more tend to have higher rates of obesity-related illnesses, elevated heart rate, and reports of anxiety. Car travel also harms community wellbeing by contributing to air pollution and climate change.

By contrast, time spent in *active* commuting (e.g., walking or biking) is associated with *improved* mental and physical health outcomes, such as reduced risk of stroke.

- **People experiencing time pressure** have lower levels of satisfaction, higher levels of stress, lower self-reported physical and emotional wellbeing, and greater insomnia. Work-life conflict can lead to higher levels of anxiety and depression; sleep disturbances; infectious disease and suppressed immune functioning; poor dietary habits, a lack of physical exercise and obesity; increased dependence on cigarettes, alcohol, medications and drugs; hypertension, high cholesterol, coronary, musculoskeletal and digestive problems; allergies and migraine headaches; burnout; and increased costs for medical consultations and prescription drugs.
- **Time spent reading** among pre-school and elementary school children is beneficial to their cognitive and behavioural development. Children who are read to daily do substantially better in kindergarten, in terms of learning skills and communications skills at the age of 4 and 5 years than youngsters whose parents read to them a few times a week or less often. Reading to a child has a particularly strong positive effect on both behaviour and preschool vocabulary.
- **Children and adolescents who spend more time watching TV and playing video games** have higher rates of obesity due to less physical activity and poorer diets. Wellbeing outcomes are mixed, however, for time spent on the computer.
- **Time spent in organized, extra-curricular activities** such as sports, music, art and dance, is beneficial for both children and adolescents. They have higher verbal scores, better academic success, improved social skills and mental health outcomes, and are generally less likely to use substances such as drugs, alcohol or tobacco than non-participants.
- **More frequent family meals among adolescents** is linked to improved adolescent wellbeing such as lower rates of drug use, better nutrition, and improved academic achievement.
- **Retired people aged 65 and over who spend time in active pursuits** enjoy better health, lower rates of dementia, and live longer.
- As with working adults, **retired people 65 and over who spend their time caregiving**, experience poorer quality of life and less life satisfaction. On the other hand, those who spend time volunteering for non-caregiving activities are physically healthier, live longer, and enjoy better mental health.
- **Participating in leisure and culture pursuits**, either individually or overall, contributes to individual, community, and societal wellbeing. Some relationships are stronger than others. Taking part in physical activity and exercise, for



example, is more strongly related to physical wellbeing and the prevention of disease, engaging in social activities is more strongly linked to social wellbeing, and participating in the arts can help to enhance both social and psychological wellbeing.

- **Participating in leisure and culture activities** not only contributes to immediate feelings of wellbeing, but the benefits can be sustained over time if the activity is continued. People who enjoy an active leisure lifestyle throughout their lives are more likely to have higher levels of wellbeing and life satisfaction. Most importantly, early exposure to all forms of leisure and culture activities leads to early adoption by children and adolescents, and these patterns of participation continue throughout adulthood.
- **The places and facilities for leisure and culture** are very important to individuals and communities. They help foster local identity, bring a community together, and reduce social exclusion. They also contribute to a community's quality of life and environmental and economic health.
- **The “greening” of urban areas** has important benefits for the environmental wellbeing of communities as well as the social and psychological wellbeing of residents who use and enjoy these spaces. When people live close to parks, open spaces, and other arts, culture, and recreation facilities, they participate more in leisure and culture activities, particularly physical activity.

## 4.2 Some Common Threads

Previous research studies released by the CIW revealed a number of common threads connecting the various wellbeing categories. Some of those trends can again be seen in both the Time Use and Leisure and Culture research studies.

### Gender is Strongly Connected to Wellbeing

A higher proportion of women – nearly 20% more than men – feel caught in a time crunch. One reason is that more women provide unpaid care to seniors and for more hours per week. Employed women with children experience greater time pressure, reduced work-life balance and a decreased sense of emotional wellbeing compared to employed women without children. The situation is worst among those working women who also shoulder most of the domestic and caregiving duties in the home.

There are still sharp divisions in unpaid labour between genders in Canadian society. Differences between men and women are narrowing, because married men with children are spending more time on housework and married women are spending less. Nonetheless, women aged 25 to 54 years continue to do 1.7 times the unpaid work compared to men the same age.

Women who report greater satisfaction with work-life balance tend to spend more time sleeping and engaged in leisure activities. Yet, while the amount of time spent on social and leisure activities has been dropping for both women and men, the drop has been greatest among women. This is, perhaps, not surprising given research showing that time spent caregiving is associated with reduced time for leisure.

### Marginalized Groups Experience Greater Time Use Challenges

Canadians who are marginalized by race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, dis/ability, gender, sexual orientation and language proficiency, experience systemic barriers to social and economic opportunity that directly influence their time use patterns and indirectly impact on their exposure to health risks and participation in health-enhancing activities.

Research shows that low income, living in a poor neighbourhood, low parental education, large family size, recent immigration, racialized status, and Aboriginal status are significant determinants of participation in organized sport or structured lessons. In fact, low household income is one of the strongest determinants of lack of participation. The most likely cause is lack of financial ability to pay for such activities.

Leisure experiences are socially and culturally constructed and shaped by the inequalities of society. The reality that some have considerably more power and money than others – and that the gap between the two continues to grow – needs to be addressed through responsive economic, social, cultural, and health policy solutions.

### Neighbourhood Quality Affects Wellbeing

There is increasing evidence that the characteristics of a neighbourhood can alter individual time use and wellbeing by providing either opportunities or barriers to health-enhancing activities such as physical activity, healthy eating and other forms of positive or negative social engagement.

Access to healthy resources such as community, cultural, and sport and recreation facilities, and even open spaces, has been identified as a key determinant of the quality of life of individuals and communities. It can play a major role in the prevention and treatment of many health conditions whereas areas that lack these resources can be associated with higher rates of disease and ill-health. Areas of Toronto, for example, that have limited access to stores selling fruits and vegetables, have higher rates of diabetes. Adolescents who live closer to parks and recreational facilities and who live in neighbourhoods with better traffic safety are more likely to exercise.

A second important neighborhood quality is ‘walkability’, which is reflected in good pedestrian infrastructure, how a neighbourhood looks and feels to those who live in it, and traffic safety. People who live in urban centres are more likely than others to walk, bike or take public transit to do chores and as their main way of getting to work. They are more likely to walk to a store if it can be reached within 5 to 10 minutes. Those who live in moderate to high density neighbourhoods with community resources within

walking distance from home are 2.4 times more likely to meet the 30 minute recommended daily minimum of physical activity. Neighbourhoods that score high on the 'activity-friendly index' (measuring population density, availability and access to retail services, level of car ownership and local crime rates) have lower rates of obesity and diabetes.

A third characteristic of neighbourhoods that is consequential for time use and wellbeing, relates to its social characteristics. Social features of the neighbourhood can influence how neighbourhood residents spend their time by influencing, for example, their participation in leisure activities and their frequency of social interactions. Neighbourhoods that are socially cohesive have higher levels of connectedness, mutual trust and informal social supports. In communities where perceptions of crime are low, children and adults spend more time in social and recreational activities. The ability to arrange childcare at short notice can depend on the level of trust among neighbours and the expectation that a good deed will be reciprocated in the future.

### The Wellbeing of Youth is a Large Concern

The research study on Time Use underscores what previous studies have shown – that there is considerable reason to be concerned about the wellbeing of young Canadians.

When parents work non-standard hours, their children also pay a price in the form of poorer social and emotional wellbeing. Adolescents who are required to work to bolster family income generally perform worse in school and are more likely to drop out. Children and adolescents jeopardize their potential health and cognitive outcomes when they spend excessive time watching TV and playing video games, although there is some evidence that there are cognitive, problem-solving, and hand-eye co-ordination benefits to using computers and playing video games. While the fact that a majority of children and adolescents are participating regularly in an organized extracurricular activity is good news, it is troubling that between 17% and 25% are not doing so.

## 5. Ideas for Positive Change

Canadians believe that the path to a meaningful life is built from, among other things, balanced time use and fulfilling leisure and culture activities. Our quest to improve upon the current situation will require both “remedying the bad” and “enhancing the good”.

Below are a number of ideas that could help bring about positive change. The list is by no means comprehensive, nor is it intended to be. One of the objectives of the CIW is to engage Canadians in a dialogue about the types of policy solutions that would improve our quality of life. The CIW hopes that its research findings and ideas for change will help spark such a dialogue.

1. **Upgrade and effectively enforce employment standards** to ensure all workers have access to basic labour rights, including those in precarious circumstances facing demands for flexible and non-standard employment. As a way to improve enforcement of existing standards, the Workers Action Centre ([www.workersactioncentre.org](http://www.workersactioncentre.org)) has proposed the idea of extending investigations of individual substantiated employment standards violations to cover all employees within a workplace. This would help curb offences while reducing duplication of individual claims against the same employer. Pilot projects within sectors with a history of violations – such as cleaners, business services, temporary employment agencies, small-scale manufacturing – could be a first step in testing this approach across various jurisdictions.
2. **Dig deeper on how time use, leisure and recreation are affecting particular groups** by collecting better and more frequent information. Some groups of Canadians – defined by race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, dis/ability, gender, sexual orientation and language proficiency – experience particular systemic barriers that further compromise time use patterns and limit participation in leisure and health enhancing activities. By looking at the different experiences of Canadians, we can more effectively pinpoint research and policy development.
3. **Reduce the time crunch through family friendly work policies.** As a result of a growing awareness of work-life balance issues and the impact on employees, many companies are addressing the issue by offering parental leave top-ups, onsite daycare, earned time off programs, working from home, job sharing and other initiatives. For examples of good practices in Canada, check out the list of *Canada’s Top 25 Family Friendly Employers* at [www.canadastop100.com/family](http://www.canadastop100.com/family).
4. **Meet the needs of modern families through family friendly social policies** that are balancing caregiving of aging parents and/or younger children. Expanding access to early learning and childcare is one part of the equation. The OECD has identified access to early learning and care support (including out of school hours care services) as a key family friendly policy. Parents in Québec

already have access to \$7 per day childcare while Ontario will begin rolling out a full day early learning program for 4 and 5 year olds starting in September 2010. Strengthening eldercare and equitable access to aging at home options is the other side. Polling by the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) shows that Canadians of retirement age would want to bring care services into their home, even at a cost, rather than going to a facility for care. However, seniors also report that not enough quality in-home or in-facility care services are available in most provinces to meet the need – [www.carp.ca](http://www.carp.ca).

5. **Encourage neighbourhood “walkability”** through the urban planning process, to improve infrastructure, aesthetics, traffic safety and closeness to stores. Walkable neighbourhoods offer diverse benefits to the environment, our health, our finances, and our communities. To find out how your home stacks up on “walkability” check out [www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com). It calculates the “walkability” of any address based on the distance from that address to nearby amenities such as stores, parks, restaurants, libraries and other services.
6. **Invest more in school-based health promotion** as a proven strategy to boost young peoples’ physical activity, nutrition, and mental health as well as contributing to moderating how much time young people spend in front of TV and playing video games. FoodShare’s Good Food Café bills itself as “the future of school lunches.” It serves healthy, affordable, and nutritious food to students of the College Français, which shares the same building as the Café in west Toronto. Mindful that students come from across the city, some are from families with limited food budgets, Foodshare is working on ways to make subsidized meals "invisible" through a debit card system. It's also boosting local sourcing, and encouraging farmers/growers to visit the students or vice versa, bringing food into the curriculum – [www.foodshare.net](http://www.foodshare.net).
7. **Read to young children** as a sure way to improve their learning and communication skills and help them get ready for school. To find 'tips for parents' on how to foster early literacy, visit the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) website at <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/LessonsInLearning/LiL-1Feb2006.htm?Language=EN>. To find a good read for a younger person, check out the shortlist of candidates for the annual Book of the Year for Children Award of The Canadian Association of Children’s Librarians available on the Canadian Libraries Association website [www.cla.ca](http://www.cla.ca).
8. **Expand opportunities for lifelong learning, recreation and social interaction for seniors** through age-friendly community planning. Age-friendly spaces reap benefits for urban populations as a whole. Barrier-free buildings and streets enhance the mobility and independence of people living with disabilities, young as well as old. Ensuring affordable and accessible public transit as well as social and community supports for older people ease the stress of families caring and allow for the kind of work and volunteering on the part of older people that helps build strong communities. Ensuring participation also helps the local economy profit from the patronage of older adult consumers.

9. **Encourage barrier-free arts and culture activities** through support and promotion of performing artists, productions, festivals and venues. A good example is the annual Luminato festival ([www.luminato.com](http://www.luminato.com)), a ten-day celebration of the arts where Toronto's stages, streets, and public spaces are infused with culturally diverse theatre, dance, classical and contemporary music, film, literature, visual arts, and design. Luminato provides many free, accessible events, 'accidental encounters with art', and incorporates Toronto's cultural diversity in its programming.
10. **Promote inclusive environments for physical, leisure and social activities** by ensuring everyone has the opportunity to participate. Inclusion can be enabled through initiatives such as discounted or free programming available for those with limited incomes, as well as tax credits to allow all families to better afford these programs. In the area of sports, True Sport ([www.truesportpur.ca](http://www.truesportpur.ca)) is a growing movement of people across Canada who believe that sport can transform lives and communities – if we commit to organizing community sport activities that are healthy, fair, inclusive, fun and stand against cheating, bullying, aggressive parental behaviour, and 'win at all costs' thinking.
11. **Engage volunteers** from diverse backgrounds with various interests by more effectively harnessing the opportunities and knowledge of the community and voluntary sector. Volunteer Canada ([www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca)) is proposing the idea of a Canadian Volunteer Support System for communities across the country. This system would target training, knowledge sharing, innovation and basic volunteer management resources for those at the grass roots level who must deal daily with the challenges of finding willing volunteers and assuring that those volunteers are effective in providing vital services.