



# Active Living Strategy

Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

2014



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## **Purpose**

The purpose of the Active Living Strategy, a partnership between the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (MODL) and the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), is to increase the uptake in physical activity over the lifespan, for all residents in all communities of the municipality. The goal to increase physical activity through municipal Active Living Strategies is a component of Thrive! A plan for a Healthier Nova Scotia (Province of Nova Scotia, 2012).

## **Definitions**

For the purpose of this Strategy, **physical activity** shall be defined as: “any body movement that increases your heart rate and breathing. It includes active play, recreation, sport, active pursuits, walking, cycling, fitness, exercise, and routine active tasks, such as household chores like snow shoveling or cleaning for example.” This definition was used in the telephone survey.

Recreation services are an integral component to municipal physical activity opportunities. The District of Lunenburg has an active and valued recreation department, with a goal of creating “recreation opportunities for all”. For the purpose of this Strategy, **recreation** shall be defined as in the National Recreation Framework: “Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing” (2014).

**Active transportation** is a priority of this Strategy, and also a strategic goal of MODL. For the purpose of this Strategy, active transportation shall be defined as “a means of getting around in your community. Active transportation refers to any form of human-power transportation including, but not limited to, walking and bicycling”. This definition was used in the telephone survey.

Walking and bicycling are examples of **moderate to vigorous physical activity**. These types of activities are components of the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology guidelines (see page 6). Moderate physical activity raises your heart rate, but you can still speak while doing the activity. Vigorous physical activity significantly raises your heart rate, where you can only speak a few words before pausing for a breath (CSEP, 2011).

## **Mission**

The Active Living Strategy of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg exists to achieve results in the following categories:

- Quality opportunities;
- Awareness;
- Quality leadership development;
- Strong community engagement;
- Deliberate outreach to those who are not engaged;
- Quality program development;
- Community use of facilities and spaces;
- Strong partnerships;
- Community capacity building;
- Social connectivity; and
- Fiscal responsibility.

## **Vision**

Our goal, through the Active Living Strategy, is to create and sustain a culture that supports healthy, active lifestyles throughout the lifespan. The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg strives to build strong working partnerships with the community in a spirit of collaboration with our regional partners. As a rural municipality, we value and enjoy access to the pristine natural beauty of our region's coastline, lakes, and forests. Healthy, active lifestyles are built on a strong volunteer base and social connection that enhances the quality of life in our region. We embrace our rural communities, which are caring, productive, and engaged. There are equitable opportunities for everyone to access recreation, through a mix of structured and unstructured play for all ages and demographics. Inclusive and welcoming access to places and spaces promotes social interaction and the pure joy of participation, with recreation opportunities for all.

## **Role of the Active Living Committee**

In October 2013, an ad-hoc committee of Council was created to assist in the development of this strategy. The Active Living Committee is comprised of the following members, in addition to the Active Living Coordinator:

- Trudy Payne, Director of Recreation Services, MODL
- Debby Smith, South Shore Regional Representative, Active Living Branch, DHW
- Lisa MacAlpine, Population Health Promoter, South Shore District Health Authority
- Terry Dorey, Councillor, District 6, MODL
- Karen Mackenzie, community member
- Laren Bedgood, youth community member

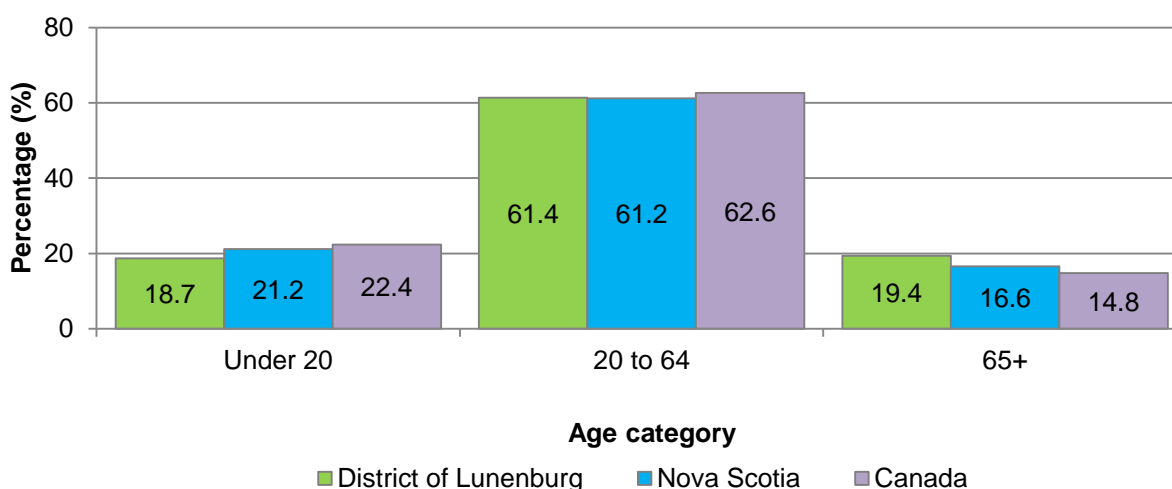
The Active Living Committee meets monthly, and is integral to the design of this strategy, including communications and promotion; community consultation design; mission, vision, objective, and action statements; and editorial responsibilities.

## Situation analysis

### Community profile

The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg consists of over 130 individual communities, with a combined population of 25,118 at time of the 2011 Census (Statistics Canada, 2012). Incorporated in 1879, MODL was built upon traditional economies such as fishing, farming, and logging. The geography of MODL is diverse – including white sand beaches, marshes, dense woodlands, rocky shorelines, riverbanks, fields, and coastal islands. Characteristic of the South Shore, MODL is treasured for its slow pace of life and strong community. This history, combined with a rich natural environment, makes our municipality a special part of the ‘beautiful South Shore’ of Nova Scotia.

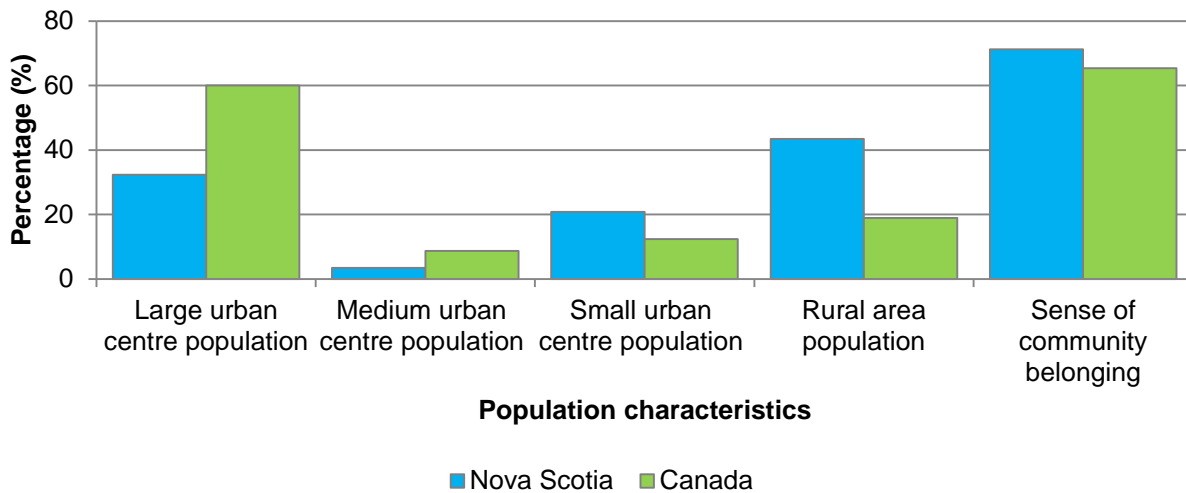
**Figure 1: Population by age category, District of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, and Canada, 2011.**



Source: Nova Scotia Community Counts (2011).

When compared to Nova Scotia and Canada, the District of Lunenburg has a lower proportion of young residents (under 20 years of age), a similar proportion of adults ages 20 to 64, and a higher proportion of adults ages 65 and over. These proportions mean that active living priorities and physical activity offerings need to reflect local demographics, as opposed to provincial and national trends. The senior population is one that is growing, and one that the District of Lunenburg has identified as a priority for recreation opportunities (see Action Plan).

**Figure 2: Population size and community, Nova Scotia and Canada, 2011.**

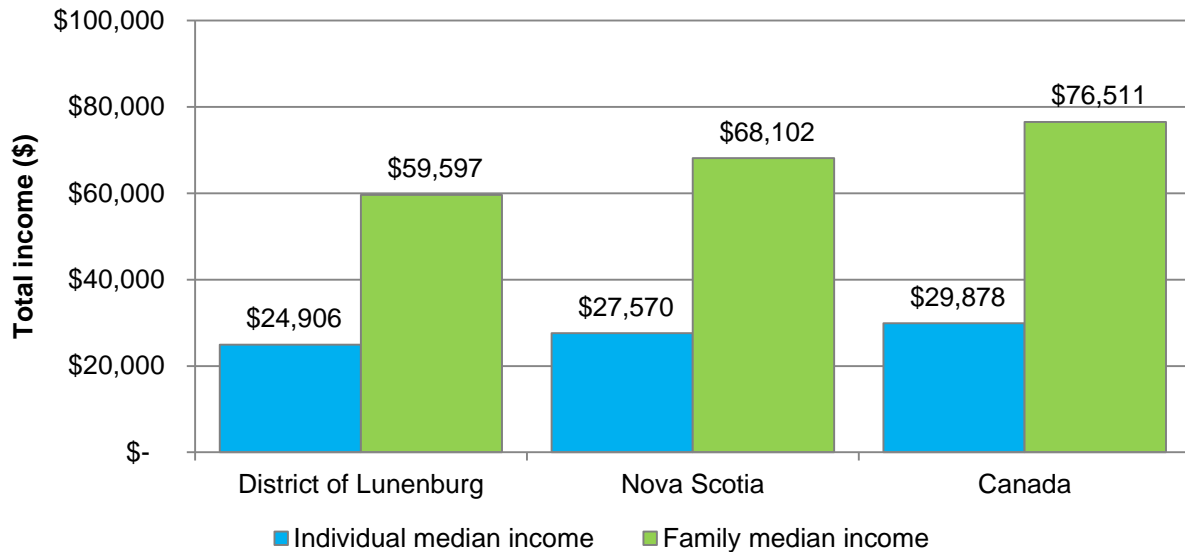


Source: Statistics Canada (2013b).

While specific statistics for MODL are not yet available, Nova Scotia has a greater proportion of small urban centre (20.8%) and rural area population (43.4%) compared to Canada (12.4% and 18.9%, respectively). These rural and small town characteristics are particularly important when considering recreation and physical activity promotion, as most of the traditional recreation facilities are located in our neighbouring towns (Bridgewater, Mahone Bay, and Lunenburg). However, when viewed through a physical activity lens, the rural nature of the municipality and its unlimited possibilities for outdoor recreation is one of its strengths.

The province also has a larger proportion of residents, ages 12 and older, who reported a very strong or somewhat strong sense of community belonging (71.2% in Nova Scotia compared to Canadian average of 65.4%). It is interesting to note that while Statistics Canada research “shows a high correlation of sense of community-belonging with physical and mental health” (2013b), population health characteristics for Nova Scotia, shown later in this Strategy, are lower than the Canadian average (see Figure 5).

**Figure 3: Median individual and family income, District of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, and Canada, 2011.**



Source: Nova Scotia Community Counts (2011).

Individual and family incomes are important considerations for accessibility to physical activity opportunities. In 2011, MODL had a lower individual median income (\$24,906) compared to both Nova Scotia (\$27,570) and Canada (\$29,878). In the same year, MODL also had a lower family median income (\$58,597) compared to Nova Scotia (\$68,102) and Canada (\$76,511). As a result, reducing economic barriers to physical activity is an identified objective in the Active Living Strategy (see Action Plan).

### **Physical activity at a glance**

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) puts the objective simply: “more daily physical activity provides greater health benefits” (2014). In order to achieve this objective with measurable results, CSEP has published guidelines on the amount and type of physical activity, recommended for Canadians to achieve health benefits. For example, the recommended amount of moderate to vigorous physical activity for adults is 150 minutes per week, and 60 minutes per day for children (CSEP, 2014). The fact that national guidelines have been published to emphasize the importance of these amounts demonstrates the dire situation of Canadians’ physical health.

Overall, Canadians are not getting enough physical activity to see health benefits. Less than 15% of adults and 10% of children meet the physical activity guidelines (Garriguet & Colley, 2014).

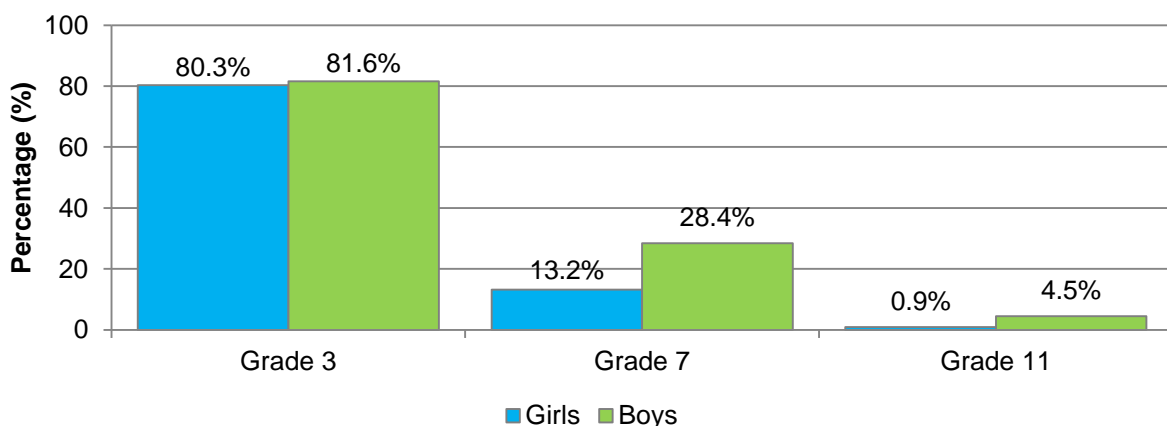


The most recent Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card (2014) reported findings in several categories that influence children’s physical activity, compared to countries around the world. Canada’s rankings were as follows:

- Strategies and investments:
  - Government: C
  - Non-government: A-
- Settings and sources of influence:
  - School: C+
  - Family and peer support: C
  - Community and the built environment: B+
- Behaviours that contribute to overall physical activity levels:
  - Organized sport participation: C+
  - Active play: not enough data to report
  - Active transportation: D
  - Sedentary behaviours: F
- **Overall physical activity: D-**

These rankings, and an overall failing grade, paint a bleak bigger picture for Canadian children. In Nova Scotia, the numbers are not much better. The most recent information from Keeping Pace, a provincial research project that examined physical activity and healthy eating in children and youth, provided startling results. Boys and girls in grades 3, 7, and 11 were monitored to see if they met the recommended physical activity standard of 60 minutes per day, at least five days per week (Thompson & Wadsworth, 2012). See Figure 4 for the results.

**Figure 4: Percentage of boys and girls in grades 3, 7, and 11 who met physical activity standards, Nova Scotia.**



Source: Thompson & Wadsworth (2012).



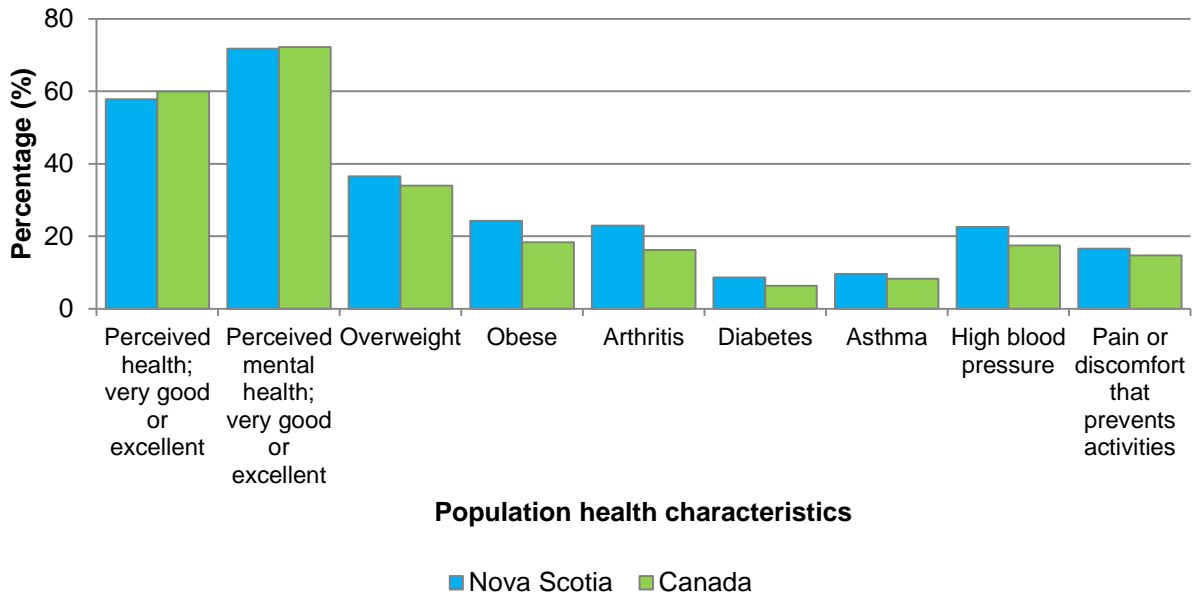
This data for both adults and children can serve as a baseline, as we work to improve and increase physical activity opportunities. Action Plan priorities cover many of the categories in the Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card, including community and built environments, active play, and active transportation. Another important component is to provide better opportunities for families, in order to have the most impact on both children and adults.

However, it is important to remember that physical activity is only one component of our overall health, as we strive for active, healthy lifestyles. The following section will review current trends to show a more complete picture of overall health.

## **Overall health**

Data from the recent Health Profile research by Statistics Canada (2013b) allows us to compare baseline overall health trends between Nova Scotia and Canada. The following three charts show results from the most recent Health Profile.

**Figure 5: Population health characteristics, Nova Scotia and Canada, 2013.**



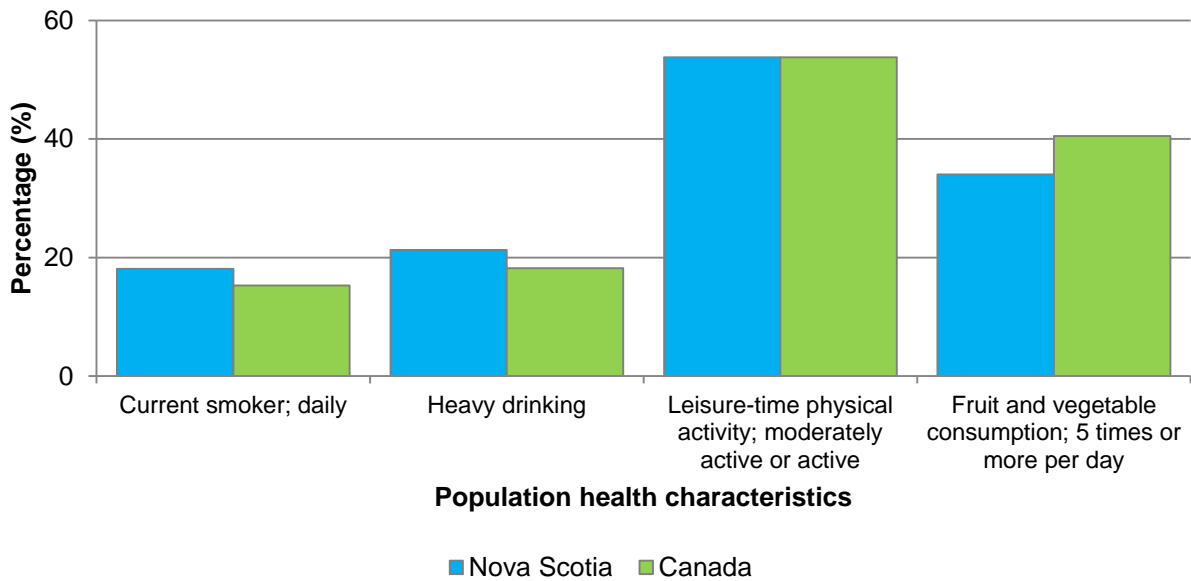
Source: Statistics Canada (2013b).

Compared to Canada as a whole, Nova Scotia has higher rates of chronic disease, including obesity (24.3% compared to 18.3%), arthritis (22.9% to 16.2%), and high blood pressure (22.6% to 17.5%).

It is also important to note that more Nova Scotians (16.6%) have pain or discomfort that prevents activities than Canadians on average (14.7%). This echoes data from the physical activity telephone survey (see Figure 19).

Finally, fewer Nova Scotians say their perceived physical health is very good or excellent (57.8% compared to 59.9% of Canadians), and fewer said their mental health is very good or excellent (71.8% to 72.2%). Both are important considerations when promoting holistic active lifestyles.

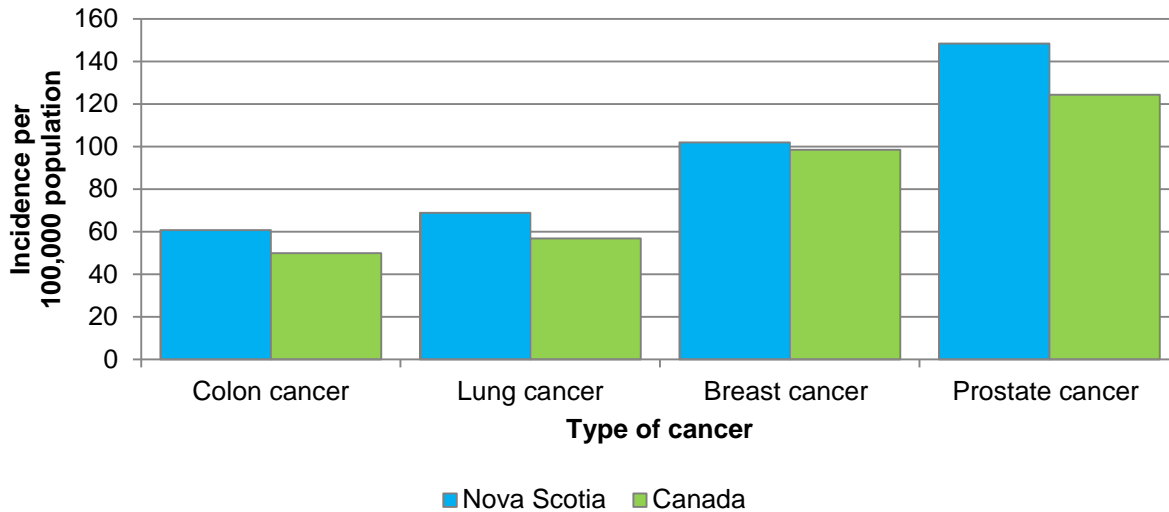
**Figure 6: Smoking, drinking, physical activity, and fruit and vegetable consumption, Nova Scotia and Canada, 2013.**



Source: Statistics Canada (2013b).

Physical activity is just one aspect of a healthy lifestyle. While the same proportion (73.8%) of Nova Scotians and Canadians are moderately active or active, other important considerations in overall population health are our habits. Compared to Canada, Nova Scotia has a higher proportion of current daily smokers (18.1% of Nova Scotians, versus 15.3% of Canadians) and heavy drinkers (21.3% to 18.2%). As a province, we are also less likely to consume fruits and vegetables 5 times or more per day (34% compared to 40.5%). All of these habits contribute to healthy lifestyles, and Nova Scotia ranks at or below Canada’s average.

**Figure 7: Cancer incidence per 100,000 population, Nova Scotia and Canada, 2013.**



Source: Statistics Canada (2013b).

Also contributing to poor overall health is our rate of cancer incidence. Nova Scotia has higher rates than the Canadian average of the four types of cancer included in Statistics Canada's Health Profile (colon, lung, breast, and prostate).

Increasingly, our lifespan includes greater incidences of chronic disease, including cancer. Combined with a poor state of mental health, and unhealthy eating habits, the picture may seem bleak. However, this situation is an opportunity to promote the role of physical activity, combined with healthy lifestyles, in the role of chronic disease prevention and recovery. Results from local community consultation will provide a baseline understanding of local needs, so that we may improve the overall health of municipal residents in MODL.

## **Methodology**

Three community consultation methods were used to investigate the physical activity needs and challenges of the District of Lunenburg: public meetings, telephone survey, and focus groups.

### **Public meetings**

Between January and February 2014, community meetings were held in all twelve districts of the municipality. These evening meetings were led by the Active Living Coordinator, and were open to any member of the public. Attendance was admittedly low, ranging from three to fifteen participants, but the small group format allowed for valuable discussion and relationship-building. Dates, locations, and attendance numbers for these meetings can be found in Appendix 1.

After introductions, a brief background on the current state of physical activity levels in Nova Scotia, and the benefits of physical activity promotion, the same questions were posed at all twelve meetings:

1. What recreation or physical activity opportunities currently exist in your area?
2. What recreation or physical activity opportunities would you like to see developed in your area?
3. What or who motivates you to be physically active?
4. What challenges do you face when you want to be active?
5. A really great/successful Physical Activity Strategy would have to...
6. Who needs to help us implement the Physical Activity Strategy? What could they do to help?
7. What would help you walk/bike/use active transportation more?

These questions were developed based on other municipal physical activity leadership plans, and finalized with input by the Active Living Committee.

The first question, concerning existing physical activity opportunities, used large, colour, aerial maps of each municipal district as a means to facilitate discussion. Residents were invited to point out their favourite locations for certain activities, whether outdoor or indoor activities. These maps were an excellent tool to provoke discussion, and also created a valuable recreation resource for MODL, with many local 'best kept secrets' identified by individual communities. This successful method of facilitation is highly recommended for future public meetings.

Common themes from the public survey were invaluable in developing the Strategy Action Plan. Popular themes for each question will be shown in the Results section (see page 14).

### **Citizen survey tools**

In partnership with the Department of Health and Wellness, the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation, and Nova Insights, the District of Lunenburg was a pilot for citizen survey tools developed in 2014. There are three components to the citizen survey tools: a random sample telephone survey questionnaire, focus group questions, and key informant questions. Question content and format were developed by the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation, under the supervision of DHW, with revision by MODL. The tools were created to be used as needed by individual communities; MODL piloted the telephone survey and focus group questions.

## **Telephone survey**

This random sample telephone survey was conducted between May 26 and June 16, 2014. Nova Insights surveyed 301 residents of MODL ages 18 and over. The objectives of the research are as follows:

1. “To further the development, implementation, and continued evaluation of physical activity strategies in municipalities and Mi’kmaq communities across Nova Scotia.
2. To provide local data to inform strategies on physical activity – and the extent to which these align with physical activity opportunities in the area” (Nova Insights, 2014).

Results from the telephone survey were analysed by Nova Insights with review by both DHW and MODL.

## **Focus groups**

In the spring of 2014, focus groups were held with four key groups:

1. Seniors, or organizations that represent seniors;
2. Recreation and sport organizations;
3. Women’s organizations; and
4. Youth.

A fifth focus group with local businesses was planned, but cancelled due to low attendance. Focus group meetings were digitally recorded, then transcribed by the Active Living Coordinator.

As a component of the citizen survey tool, focus group questions were developed by DHW and the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation, with input from MODL. However, similar to the choice of tools available to a municipality, the choice of questions is also up to the municipality (see Appendix 2 for the version used by MODL). This flexibility was valuable to allow those conducting the focus group to alter questions as suited the audience. For example, some focus groups followed questions in the order provided, and welcomed prompts; other groups did not follow questions but rather had meaningful discussion on their own. Both formats suited the audience and provided valuable input for the Active Living Strategy.

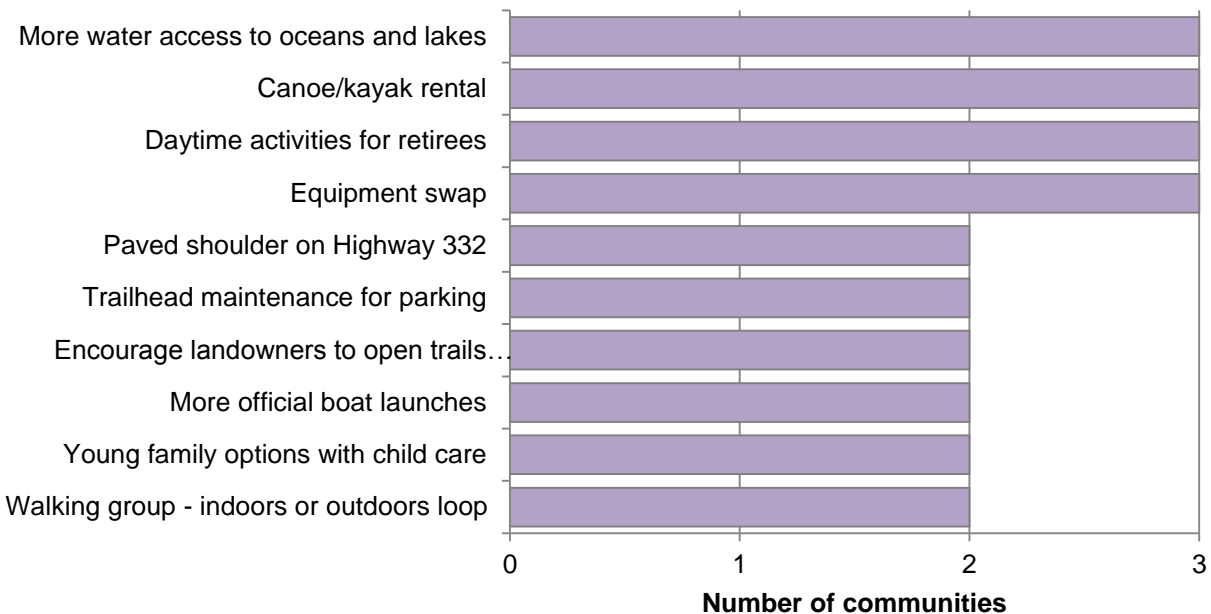
Of note is the unique partnership that developed specific questions for the youth focus group. Working with YMCA Youth Leader members and staff, located in Bridgewater, a set of questions was developed from the suggested citizen survey tool, tailored to the youth audience and followed loosely during the focus group:

1. What comes to mind when I say the words physical activity?
2. Why do you think Lunenburg County ranks so poorly in terms of overall health and physical activity levels?
3. Did you know that people your age need 60 mins/day of activity to see the benefits? How do you fit in achieving that level? If you don't meet it, what would help you get there?
4. What kinds of activities do you do most often? If you're not active, what's stopping you?
5. Where do you go to be active (cue to discuss outdoor opportunities)?
6. What do you think are the good reasons to be physically active?
7. What are the risks of not being active?

## Results

### Public meeting feedback

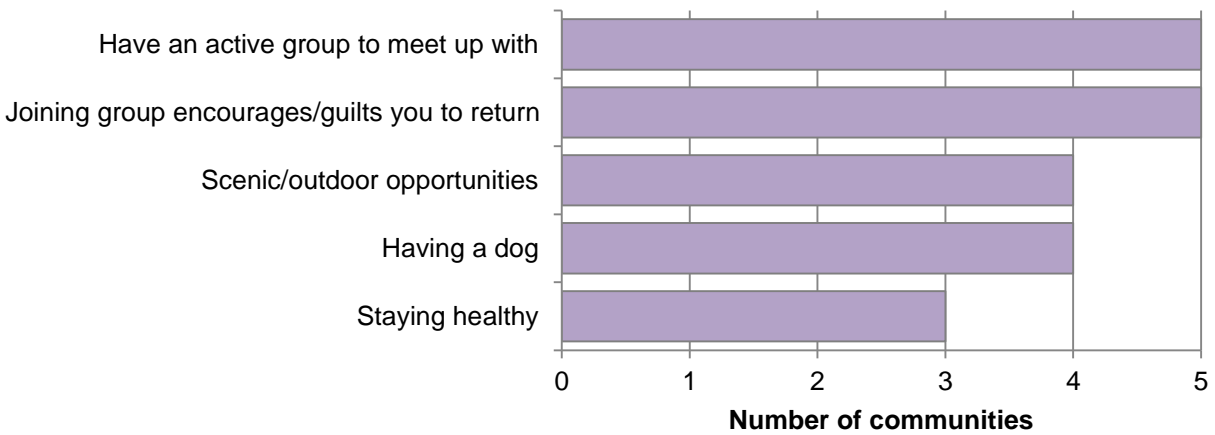
**Figure 8: Top 10 results from Question 2 – what recreation/physical activity opportunities do you want to see in your community?**



There were several requests for more water-based recreation activities (boat launches, boat rentals, water access). This has been reflected in the Action Plan, with an objective to “improve access to and use of water recreation opportunities” (see page 37).

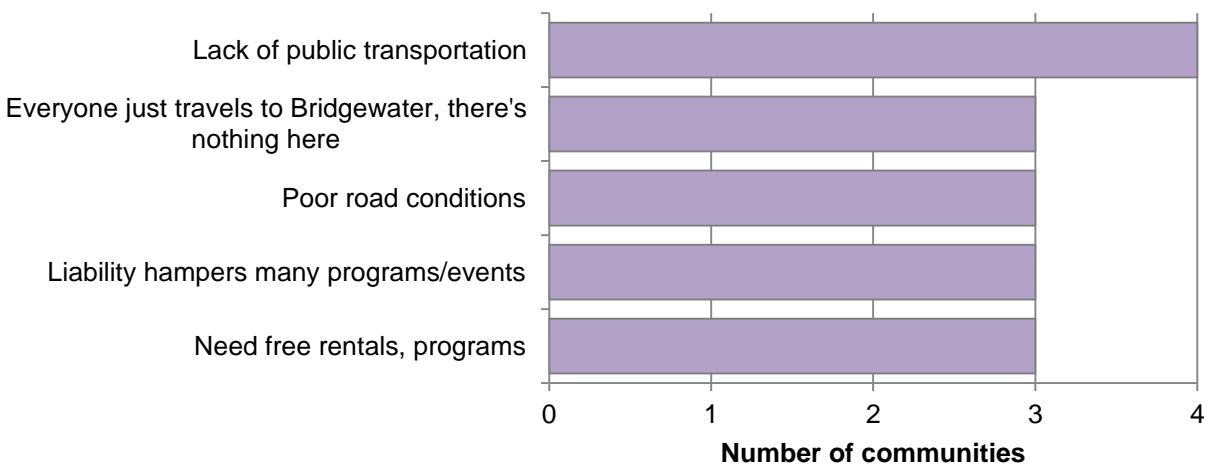


**Figure 9: Top 5 results from Question 3 – who or what motivates you to be active?**



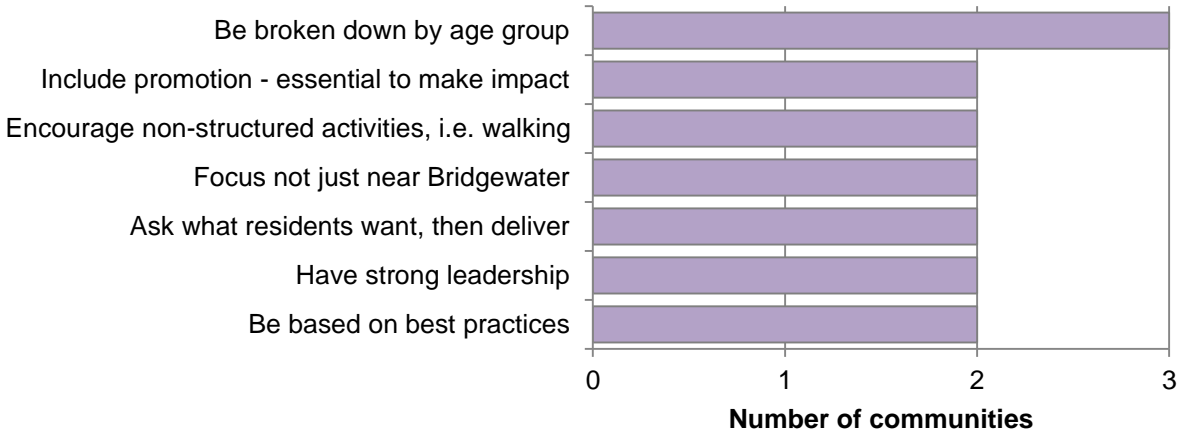
The importance of social activities seen in the public meetings was echoed in the telephone survey, where many people said they would be more active if they had someone to join them (see Figure 19). This emphasis on social activities is reflected several times in the Action Plan.

**Figure 10: Top 5 results from Question 4 - what challenges do you face when you want to be active?**



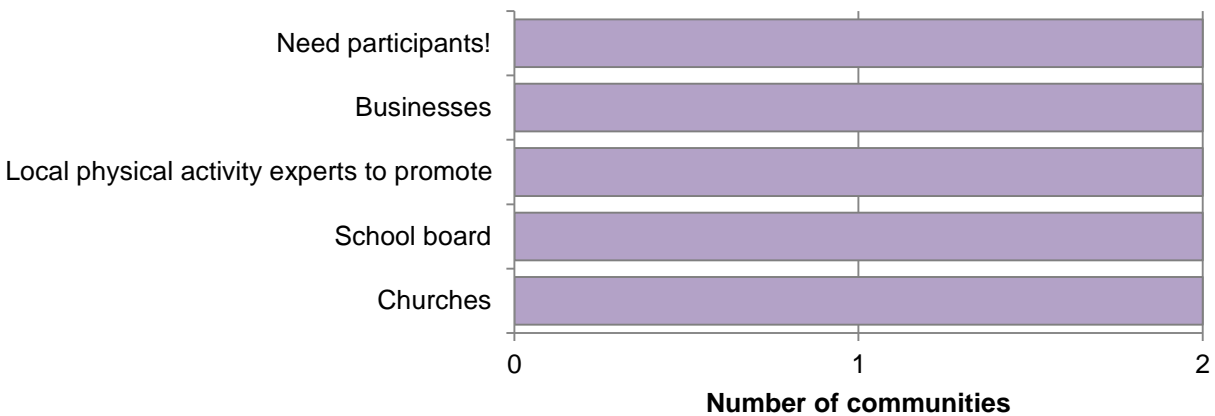
The lack of public transportation was a common topic of discussion, in several communities. This issue is being addressed by other municipal departments, echoing the importance of working with the whole of municipal government to achieve common goals (see page 33).

**Figure 11: Top results from Question 5 - a really great/successful strategy needs to...**



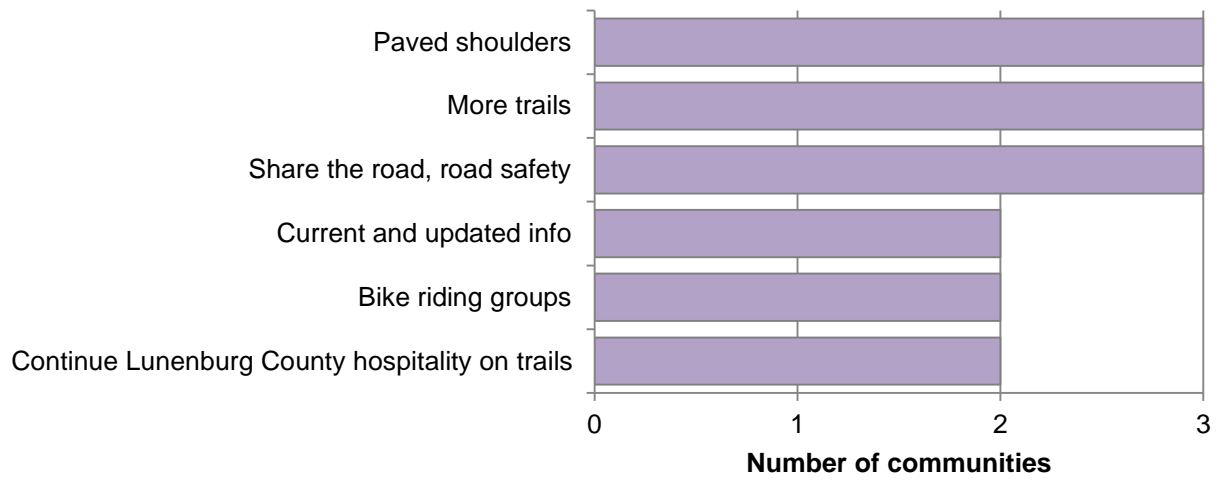
Residents' input on strategy development has helped shaped this document; for example, promotion and communication are a large component of the Action Plan. The Action Plan also includes priorities for different age groups, and ensures non-structured activities are developed.

**Figure 12: Top results from Question 7 - who needs to help us implement the Strategy?**



Partners are essential to implementing the Active Living Strategy. Churches and school boards, and therefore schools, are recognized by the community as important facilities that could be used more effectively through community use agreements. This goal to work with local community facilities has been reflected in the Action Plan.

**Figure 13: Top results from Question 7 - what would help you use active transportation more?**

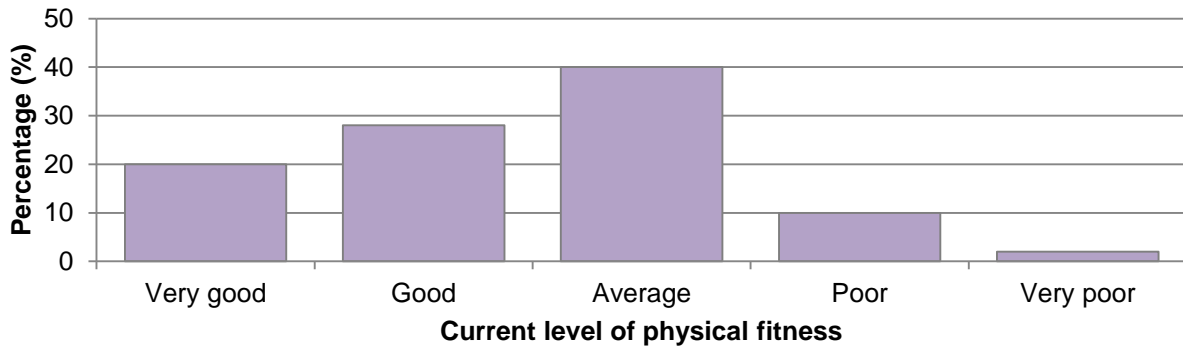


When asked what would help them use active transportation as part of their daily routine, residents emphasized both social and infrastructure priorities. This combination has also been reflected in our Action Plan, which highlight social walking and bicycling groups, as well as infrastructure work through the municipality's Active Transportation Plan.

## Telephone survey feedback

### Physical activity levels

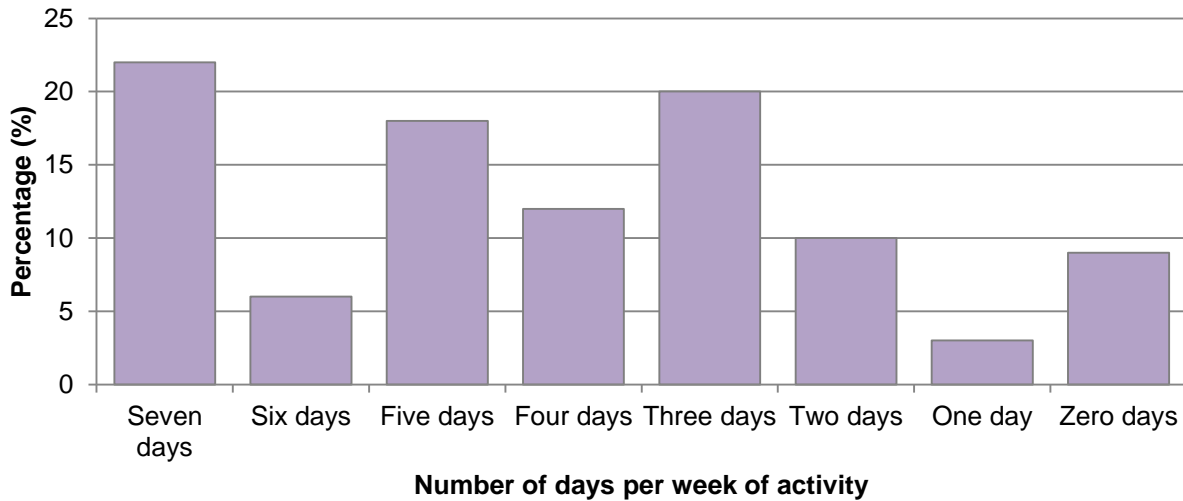
Figure 14: Self-reported physical fitness level, 2014.



Source: Nova Insights (2014).

When asked to describe their personal fitness level, nearly half (48%) of survey respondents rated their current level of physical fitness to be above average (however, see Figure 15 for a note of caution). This report, along with others from the telephone survey, will serve as benchmarks for future community physical activity levels in MODL.

**Figure 15: Self-reported activity level, 2014.**

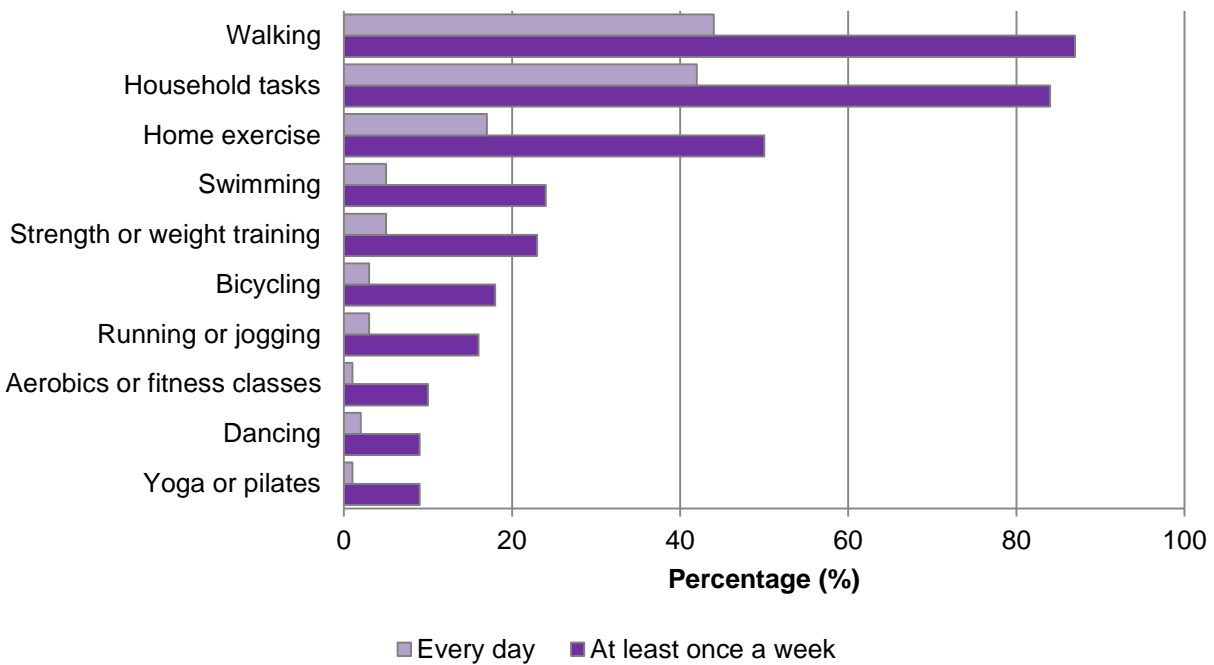


Source: Nova Insights (2014).

Over half (57%) of survey respondents report that they engage in moderate physical activity of 30 minutes or more at least 4 times per week. However, this report is likely not reflective of the true physical activity levels in our community; self-reported data generally over-estimates actual levels (Nova Insights, 2014).

As reported recently by Statistics Canada, “the discrepancy between self-reported and measured physical activity is not new” (Garriguet & Colley, 2014). When self-reported, participants often over-estimate their activity by an average of 37.5 minutes per day. When measured, some physical activity levels had been misreported by over 40% (Garriguet & Colley, 2014). Therefore, it is important to read self-reported activity levels with caution.

**Figure 16: Top 10 most common physical activities, 2014.**

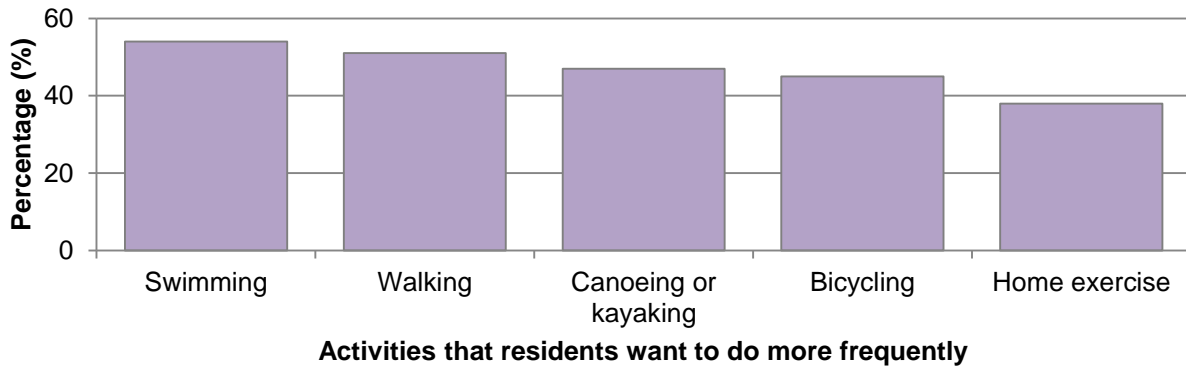


Source: Nova Insights (2014).

Walking and active household tasks are the most common physical activities for MODL residents, both every day (44% and 42%, respectively) and at least once a week (87% and 84%). Home exercise is a distant third, with 17% of residents participating every day, and 50% at least once a week. It is interesting to note that all three activities are ones that may be done at little to no cost, and at home or near home – a good reflection of the low cost, unstructured activities that are accessible in a rural community like MODL.

It is important to distinguish between recreational walking, and walking as a means of active transportation. The high results shown above are for recreational walking, as an active pastime, and are not to be confused with lower results for active transportation walking, shown in Figure 21.

**Figure 17: Top 5 activities for increased participation, 2014.**

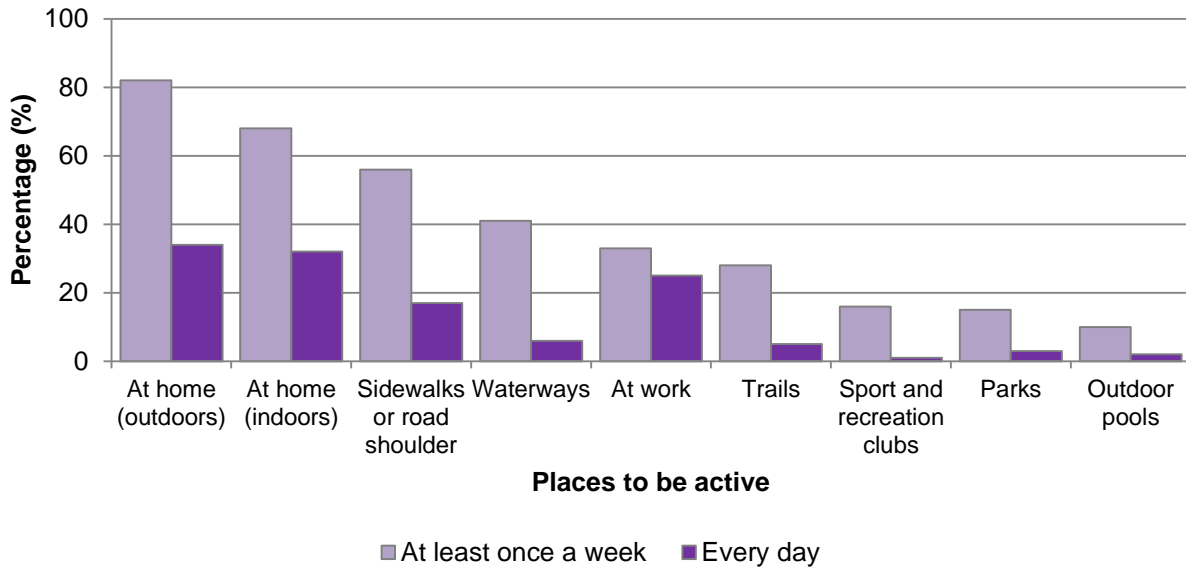


Source: Nova Insights (2014).

When asked which activities residents would like to do more frequently, swimming was mentioned most often (54% of respondents). When combined with the high number of residents who swim at least once a week (24%, shown in Figure 16), it is evident that swimming is a priority area for new recreation opportunities. This is an exciting trend, given the new indoor pool at the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre. Enhancing MODL's partnership with the Lifestyle Centre, as stated in the Action Plan, will assist the municipality in facilitating residents' desire to swim more often.



**Figure 18: Top 10 places to be active, 2014.**

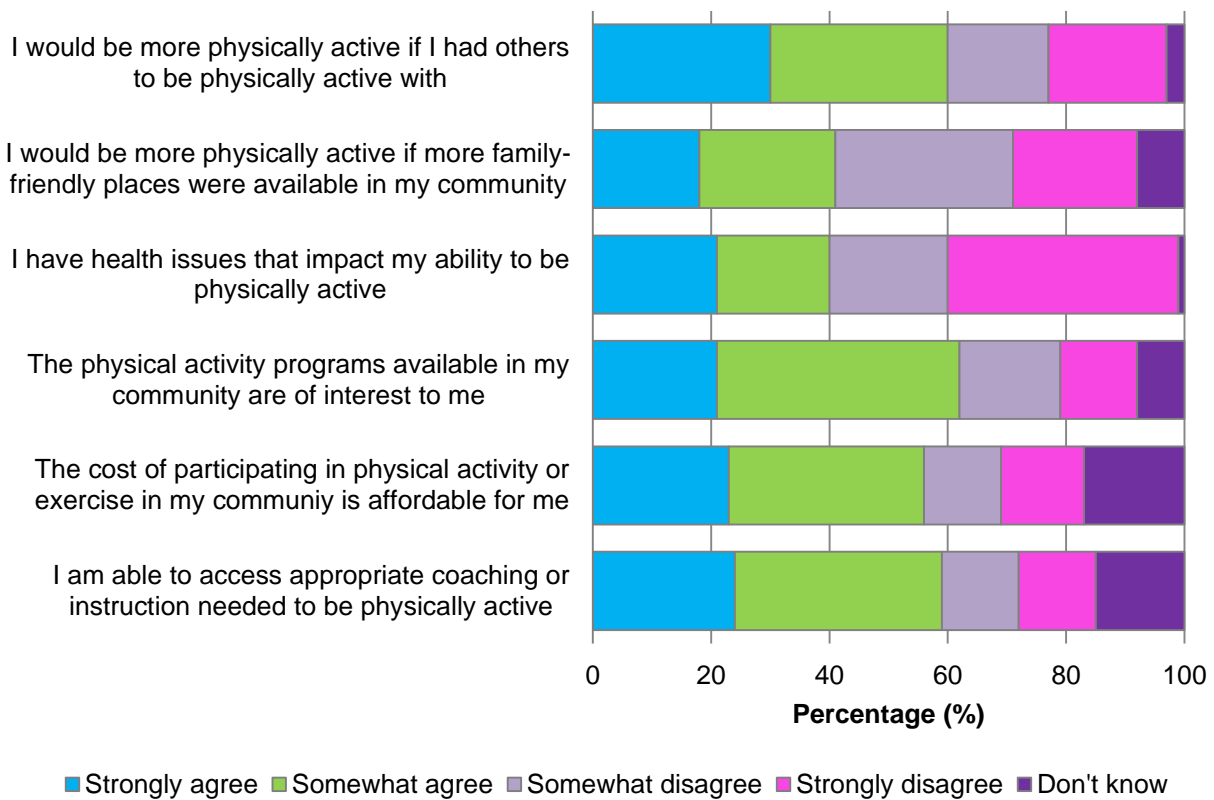


Source: Nova Insights (2014).

Residents are most commonly active at home, whether outdoors or indoors. It is also interesting to note that sidewalks and road shoulders were rated within the top 3 places to be active – given that MODL has very few sidewalks. This likely emphasizes the role that maintained sidewalks in Bridgewater, Mahone Bay, and Lunenburg play in MODL residents’ physical activity.

The work environment is another common place for physical activity, rated within the top 5 places to be active. Encouraging workplace wellness initiatives is a goal of the Action Plan, and can help facilitate activity where working residents spend a good majority of their time.

**Figure 19: Physical activity challenges, 2014.**

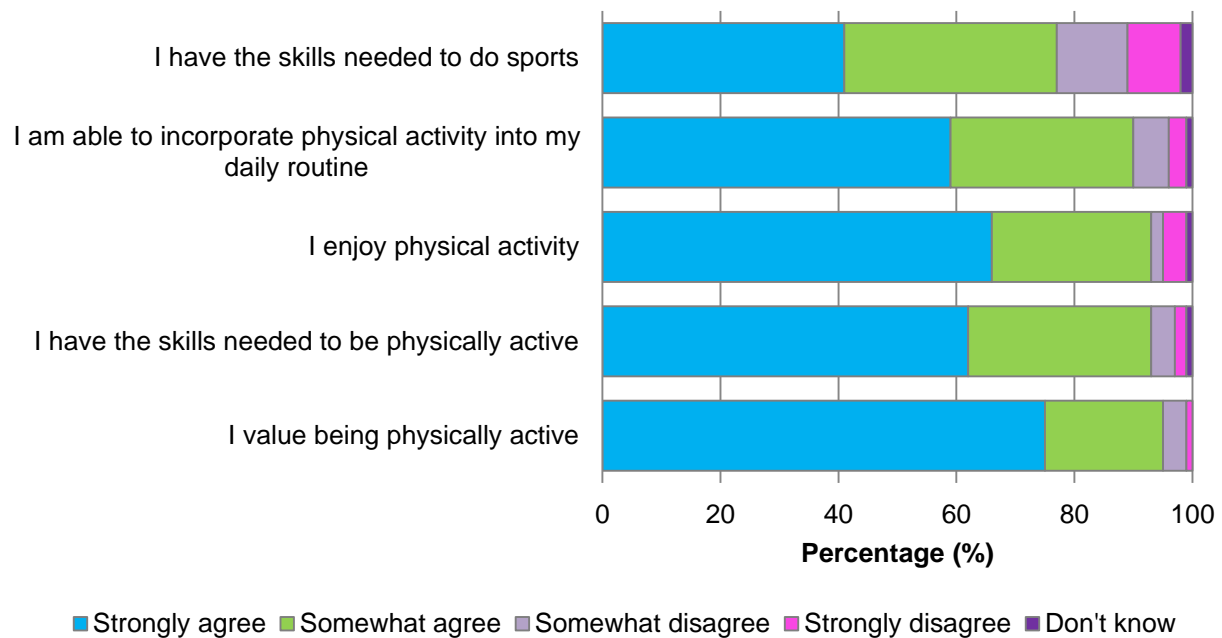


Source: Nova Insights (2014).

When asked about challenges that limit their physical activity, residents consistently rated the social environment as a major limiting factor. Most (60%) said that they would be more physically active if they had someone to be active with. This emphasis on social activities is reflected in the Action Plan, including year-round social activities, family events, walking and biking clubs, and community group development.

Health issues are another challenge to participating in physical activity. 40% of MODL residents agree that their health limits their ability to be active. This is an important consideration as we work towards overall improved health in our communities.

**Figure 20: Attitude and physical activity skills, 2014.**



Source: Nova Insights (2014).

MODL residents have a positive attitude towards physical activity. 95% of residents say they value being physically active, and 93% enjoy physical activity.

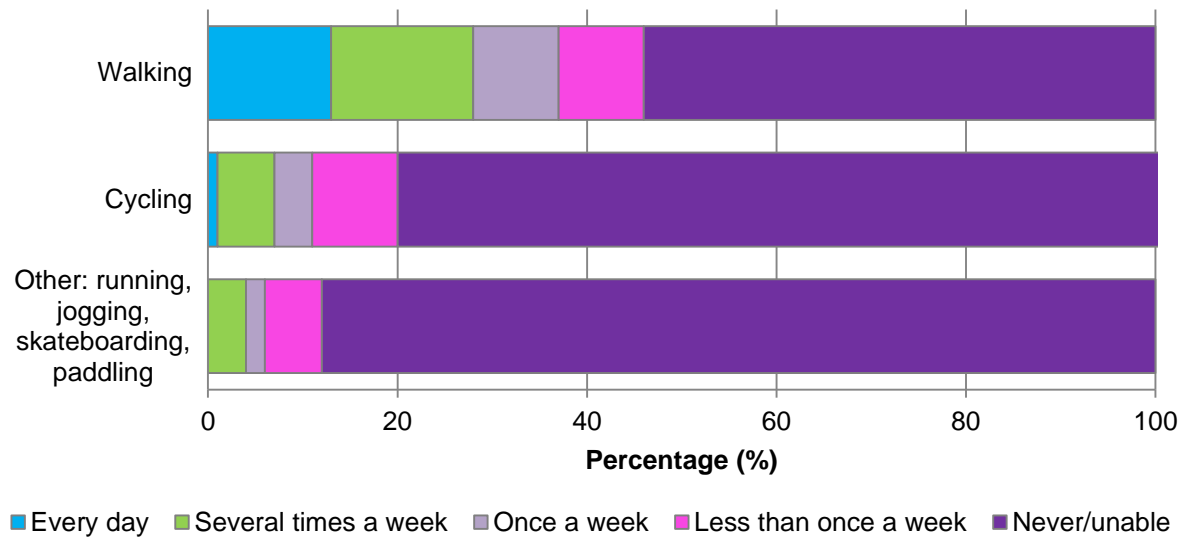
Overall, residents say they have the skills needed to be physically active, but one area for improvement is skill development in sports. 21% of residents say they do not have the skills needed to do sports. This may be because residents may see sports as requiring a greater skill set and leadership requirement, including coaching and instruction.

Along with skill development, a priority on sport is a huge opportunity to develop our social environment. To encourage these priorities MODL can support new and existing community sport group development (see Action Plan).

## Active transportation

The following results focused on active transportation are from the telephone survey of MODL residents, conducted by Nova Insights.

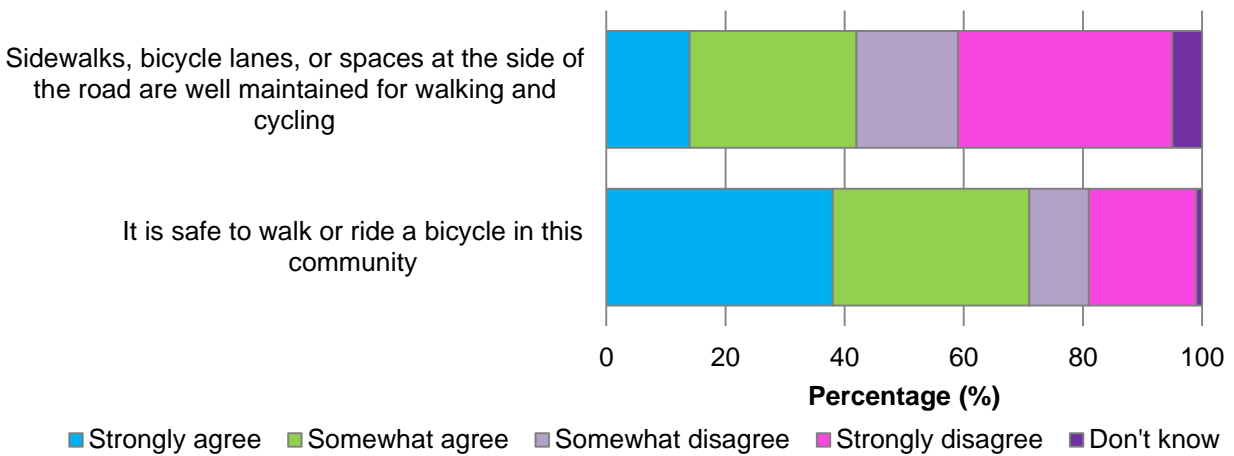
**Figure 21: Active transportation use, 2014.**



Source: Nova Insights (2014).

Although walking is the most popular form of active transportation, there are still large gains to be made in routine use. 28% of residents say they walk every day or several times a week as a means to travel to a specific destination. Only 7% of residents say the same about cycling, and just 4% mention other forms of active transportation as a common way to travel. Across the board, the majority of residents (54% for walking, 81% for cycling, and 88% for other forms) say they never use active transportation, or are unable to. Active transportation should remain a priority in order to improve these baseline numbers.

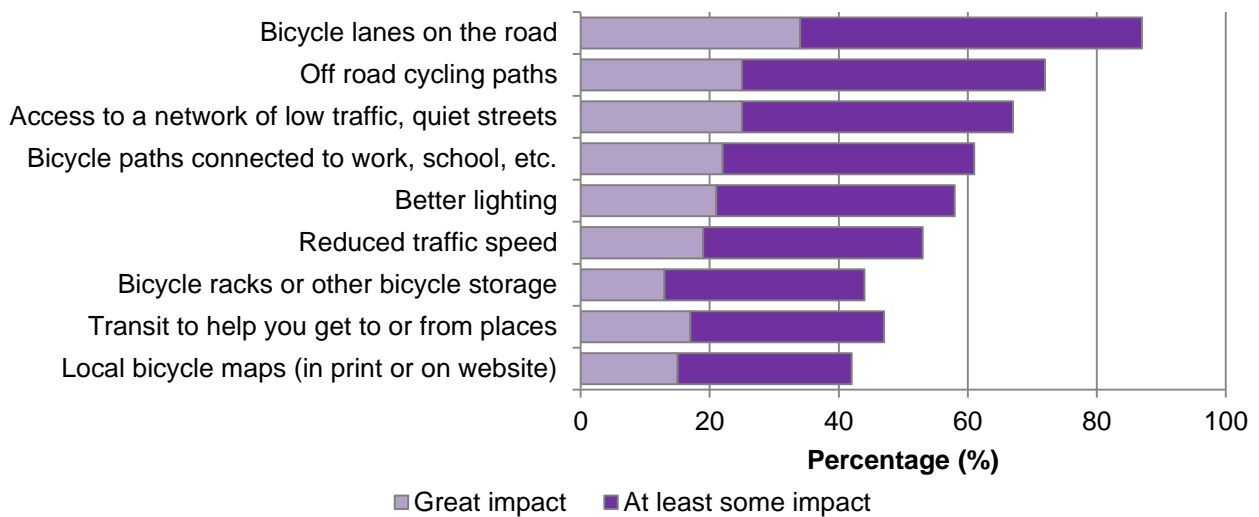
**Figure 22: Active transportation challenges, 2014.**



Source: Nova Insights (2014).

Safety and infrastructure are the top challenges that limit active transportation use. However, there seems to be a discrepancy in public opinion. While the majority (56%) disagree that active transportation infrastructure is well maintained for walking or cycling, an overwhelming majority (77%) say it is safe to walk or ride a bicycle in their community. Therefore, the greatest challenge in promoting safe active transportation may be found in improved education and awareness for drivers and pedestrians. This component is reflected both in this Strategy's Action Plan, and the municipality's Active Transportation Plan.

**Figure 23: Top 10 impacts on decision to bicycle more often, 2014.**

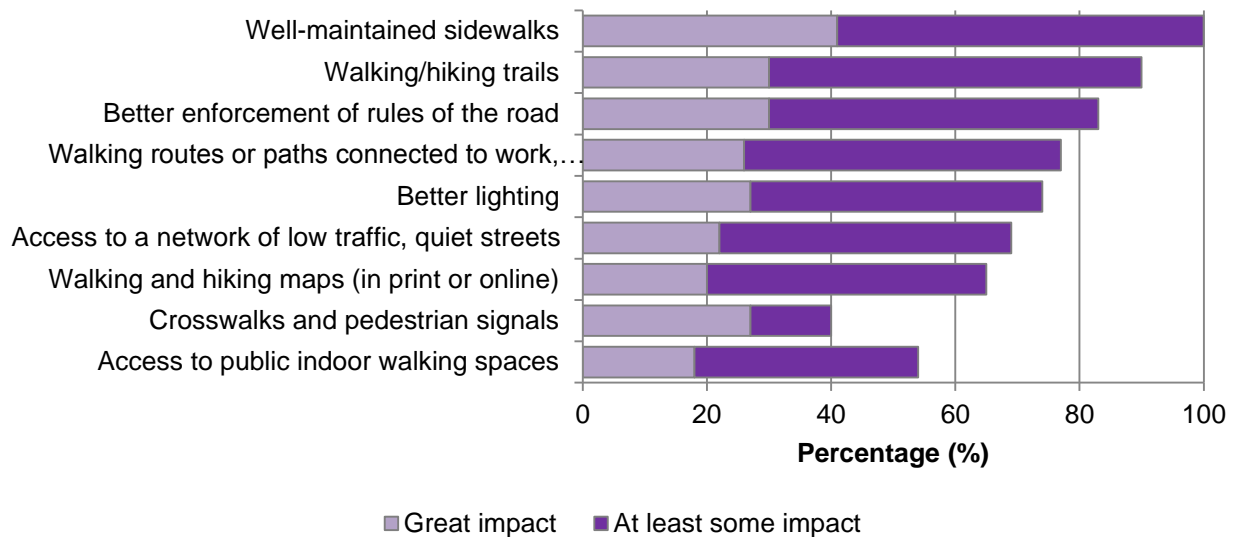


Source: Nova Insights (2014).

When asked about which changes would have an impact on their decision to bike more often, nine of the top 10 changes related to infrastructure improvements. The top three results – bicycle lanes (87%), off-road cycling paths (72%), and low-traffic networks (67%) – are all related to road work. This presents an interesting challenge, and opportunity, for MODL, which does not own, control, or maintain the majority of its streets. Collaboration with the provincial Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and neighbouring towns will allow the municipality to advocate for road improvements related to active transportation.

It is interesting to note that while not suited for road bikes, the network of existing rails to trails are ideal locations for off-road cycling paths – although residents would still like to see more improvement in this area. Better promotion of this network for commuter active transportation is one area where MODL, in collaboration with volunteer trail associations, can improve bicycle infrastructure.

**Figure 24: Top 10 impacts on decision to walk more often, 2014.**

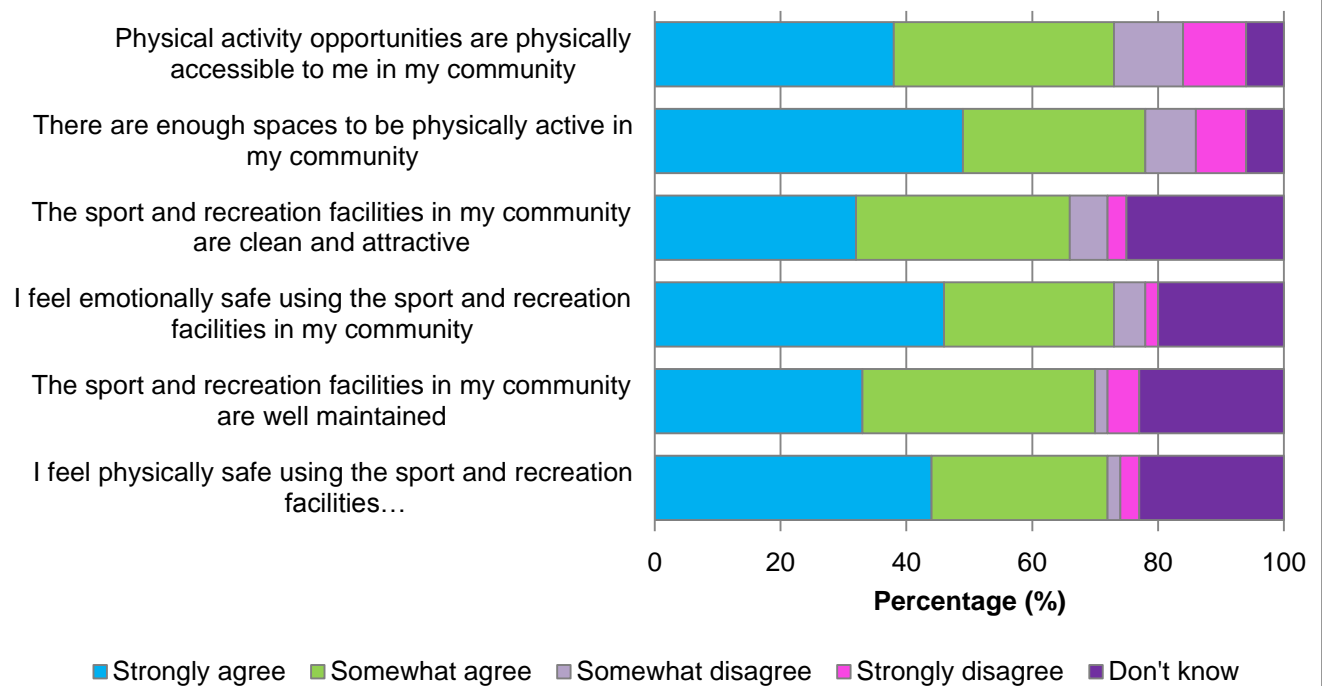


Source: Nova Insights (2014).

Influences on decision to walk were based on if they would have a great impact, or at least some impact. Well-maintained sidewalks would make the largest impression on residents' decision to walk more often (41% and 59%, respectively), followed by walking/hiking trails (30% and 60%), and better enforcement of rules of the road (30% and 53%). The variety of responses indicates the diverse nature of active transportation improvements – infrastructure, outdoor opportunities, and education. Ensuring our active transportation work is diverse will allow for the greatest impact in our communities.



**Figure 25: Sport and recreation facility challenges, 2014.**



Source: Nova Insights (2014).

The majority of residents strongly agree or somewhat agree that sport and recreation spaces are emotionally safe (46% and 27% respectively), physically safe (44% and 28%) accessible (38% and 35%), and well-maintained (33% and 37%).

### Focus group feedback

While the four focus groups represented different interests (seniors, women, sport, and youth), several key themes were clear among all groups. These key themes cover many topics, and show the holistic nature of active lifestyles. Feedback is taken verbatim from digital recordings of focus group sessions, and is detailed below:

1. Residents define their MODL community as including Towns of Bridgewater, Mahone Bay, and Lunenburg
  - a. Important to work together as municipal units, creating a concentrated effort on physical activity promotion
2. Lamenting change in society (nostalgia for the 'old days'):
  - a. Both parents working, less time to cook healthy meals or spend quality time
  - b. Influence of technology, in school and at home
  - c. Don't see kids outside anymore

3. Request to see social recreation /events for all ages
  - a. More age-friendly considerations for senior population
  - b. More opportunities for teenage youth, particularly outdoors
  - c. Family activities will help create role models
4. Active transportation infrastructure is not safe
5. Lack of physical education in schools
  - a. School facilities are often lacking, and act as a barrier for physical activity
  - b. Recreation facilities in towns are popular for District residents
6. Need a mix of unstructured and structured activities

Some of the most valuable feedback from the focus groups can be found in quotes from municipal residents, taken directly from the digital recordings of the meetings. See below for some memorable quotes.

*"I hate to see Mom and Dad drive the kids somewhere and have Mom and Dad sit in the bleachers while the kids run up and down the field, or skate, or whatever... The kids get back in the car and they drive home. Mom and Dad have got no exercise whatsoever. They have taught the kids that exercise comes from being in an expensive facility, with a team, and all kinds of equipment, when really all you need is some clothes and a pair of running shoes. Just get out there and walk, or run, or bike."*

*"When you look at the rec guide, you think 'Wow!' There is so much to do!' I just hope people are taking advantage of it."*

*"You shouldn't be bored in Lunenburg County – all you need is that Recreation guide."*

*"Walking can be painful, but if you have somebody, you'll push one another. And as you're talking, the time passes and it's easier."*

*“Last year, at lunch and recess, all of us in grade 5 went out sometimes. This year, as you walk through the hall, every grade 6 boy is sitting along the hall in a row. Sometimes they sit by the door, wearing coats, on their iPads, and I’m like, ‘That’s the closest they’ve ever been to going outside’”.*

*“We sit in one room. I’m on my phone, my mom is on her iPad, and my stepdad is on his laptop. We’re all hanging out, but we don’t say a word to each other.”*

*“Now that we have the LCLC [Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre], I think the numbers [of people being physically active] are going to go up.”*

*“If you want seniors out walking, make sure it’s safe.”*

*“When I first moved to Lunenburg, there were kids playing on the street and I thought, ‘Wow, that’s how my neighbourhood was growing up’. The last few summers, now that I think about it, I don’t see so many kids playing.”*

*“Seniors are funny – we don’t like to have anybody change our patterns. We have tried different initiatives and it’s ok for the first few days, but then the numbers drop off quickly. Then it’s only the people who were part of planning, because they feel they have to keep coming. I don’t know what type of exercise or activity would work, but it has to happen as a collective.”*

*“There’s always more that comes out of a [recreation] program than you realize – connections made, sharing information...”*

*“In high school, you only have to do one physical education credit for the whole three years. And if you have a busy schedule, gym class is the first thing to be cut to make room – but I was looking forward to taking gym!”*

*“It’s hard to be safe [biking] on the roads... it’s an obstacle course, of when you’re going to hit the next pothole.”*

Many of the discussion topics, seen from the quotes above, are priorities in the Active Living Strategy: active transportation, safe walking infrastructure and education, play for all ages, increasing opportunities for physical activity in schools, and meaningful recreation programs. The wide range of topics demonstrates MODL residents’ level of knowledge regarding active lifestyles, and that they are invested in a healthy future for our community.

## **Strategy components**

### **Socio-ecological model**

The socio-ecological model outlines the various factors that influence physical activity, or act as barriers. To achieve success in physical activity promotion, efforts should be a combination of all four components of the model (Active Canada, 2013):

1. Individual: gender, knowledge, age, skill level, perceived barriers;
2. Social environment: peer and family support, school and workplace environments, socioeconomic status, community norms;
3. Built environment: availability of facilities, community design, safety, weather, local geography; and
4. Policy: planning policies, funding, school-based policies, active transportation policies, workplace policies (DHW, 2011).

By using multi-level interventions, MODL can ensure that different messaging and efforts may find each resident's specific needs. The challenge with physical activity promotion is that focusing on only one aspect of the socio-ecological model will not be effective; physical activity does not take place in just one location, at one time, or at one point in a person's life. As a result, the four principles of the socio-ecological model have been used to outline the objectives and actions of the Active Living Strategy.

### **Priority target groups**

The priority target groups for the Active Living Strategy, as identified by DHW, are as follows:

1. Focus on youth, ages 12 to 18, especially girls;
2. Focus on female population across the lifespan; and
3. Walking and biking as part of daily living.

With these priorities in mind, utilizing the social-ecological model to apply a multi-faceted approach, MODL will ensure that efforts to increase physical activity are effective and focus on segments of the population that are inactive or sedentary, improving the health of the population as a whole.

### **Whole of municipal government**

By working with other municipal departments, the Active Living Coordinator can ensure that physical activity is integrated into discussion and decision-making. Many aspects of physical activity promotion are already linked with other municipal departments, such as active transportation (Engineering, Planning), community grants (Finance), and communications (Administration), just to name a few. These departments, along with Municipal Council as a whole, have been identified as strategic partners in aspects of the Action Plan.

### **Evaluation**

Successful implementation shall be evaluated by the community who helped inform the Active Living Strategy – the residents of MODL. Evaluation was a topic brought up at several public meetings during the community consultation phase; residents were clear that they do not want this Strategy to be a document without purpose in the municipality. This emphasis on community feedback has been reflected in the Action Plan.

Evaluation will be conducted on short, mid, and long-term timelines. In the short term, over the next year, MODL will continually evaluate the success of physical activity programming and recreation opportunities by asking participants their opinions on said programs. At the end of the first year of implementation, an annual report will be

submitted to Municipal Council and DHW, with the public invited to read the evaluation report in Council agendas and to attend the Council presentation.

In the mid-term time frame, after three years, an online survey will ask residents about their knowledge of the Active Living Strategy, and what local improvements they have seen as a result of the strategy.

In the long-term time frame, after five years, a formal telephone survey will be conducted. Similar in design to the telephone survey that informed the Active Living Strategy, this survey will gauge results based on benchmarks reported in 2014. The telephone survey results will provide the basis for a refresh of the Active Living Strategy, and help guide the next five years (and beyond) of physical activity opportunities in the District of Lunenburg.

Finally, the role of the Active Living Committee will be a component of evaluation. The Active Living Committee will be continued for one year, in line with short-term evaluation. This will ensure community feedback and input to be reviewed after one year of implementation.

## Action plan

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT			
Objective	Action	Lead(s)	Partner(s)
1. Increase the capacity of individuals, families, women, and organizations to participate in physical activity.			
	a. Reduce economic barriers to physical activity	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Department of Health and Wellness, Finance department, Municipal Council
	b. Provide social activities year-round	Recreation Program Coordinator, Active Living Coordinator	Community groups
	c. Provide family events with physical activity component	Recreation Program Coordinator, Active Living Coordinator	South Shore Family Resource Association, Better Together Family Resource Centre
	d. Improve age-friendly opportunities across the lifespan	Active Living Coordinator	Department of Health and Wellness, South Shore District Health Authority
	e. Support development of workplace wellness initiatives	Active Living Coordinator	Lunenburg County Workplace Wellness Network, South Shore Active Communities
	f. Improve opportunities for teenage youth	Active Living Coordinator	YMCA, South Shore Regional School Board
	g. Develop creative after school programs	Active Living Coordinator	South Shore Regional School Board, South Shore Active Communities
2. Increase the number and quality of physical activity leaders.			
	a. Increase number of leadership development opportunities	Active Living Coordinator	YMCA



	b. Increase number of youth leaders	Active Living Coordinator	YMCA
	c. Increase and/or maintain the number of volunteers by working with the Lunenburg/Queens Volunteer Partnership	Lunenburg/Queens Volunteer Partnership, Active Living Coordinator	Community groups
	d. Increase and support walking and cycling group leaders	Active Living Coordinator	Heart & Stroke Walkabout, CAN-Bike, Ecology Action Centre Making Tracks
<b>3. Improve opportunities for community engagement.</b>			
	a. Support development of new and existing community groups, with a priority on sport	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Community Sport Development Coordinator, community groups
	b. Ensure opportunities for feedback from the community	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Administration department
	c. Provide opportunities for all residents to be involved	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Administration department

<b>BUILT ENVIRONMENT</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead(s)</b>	<b>Partner(s)</b>
<b>1. Improve access to safe and convenient built environments for physical activity.</b>			
	a. Enhance our existing partnership with the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre	Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre, Active Living Coordinator	Municipal Council, Town of Bridgewater
	b. Promote use of non-traditional recreation facilities through community use	Active Living Coordinator	Community groups
	c. Improve accessibility to facilities	Active Living Coordinator	Department of Health and Wellness

	d. Improve community use of schools	South Shore Regional School Board, Active Living Coordinator	School principals
	e. Improve age-friendly access to facilities	Active Living Coordinator, South Shore District Health Authority	Falls Prevention
<b>2. Improve natural environments for physical activity.</b>			
	a. Increase use and appreciation of outdoor spaces through nature education programs for all ages	Active Living Coordinator	
	b. Improve user experience of parks and trails	Trails & Open Space Coordinator, Active Living Coordinator	Volunteer trail associations
	c. Continue to support trail development with volunteer trail associations	Trails & Open Space Coordinator, Active Living Coordinator	Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, volunteer trail associations
	d. Improve access to and use of water recreation opportunities	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Municipal Council
	e. Improve spaces for outdoor play	Active Living Coordinator	South Shore Active Communities
	f. Partner with Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources to promote use of Crown land opportunities for recreation	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Department of Natural Resources
<b>3. Improve walking and biking opportunities as part of daily living.</b>			
	a. Raise awareness of existing active transportation opportunities	Active Living Coordinator	South Shore Active Communities, Ecology Action Centre, Bridgewater Active Transportation Committee

	b. Work with regional partners, including Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, to improve active transportation networks	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal
	c. Continue to implement the Active Transportation Plan	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Engineering department, Planning department
	d. Expand Active and Safe Routes to School program	Active Living Coordinator	South Shore Regional School Board, Ecology Action Centre

<b>COMMUNICATION</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead(s)</b>	<b>Partner(s)</b>
<b>1. Use multiple platforms to increase awareness of physical activity benefits and opportunities</b>			
	a. Maintain the Active Living and Active Transportation sections of the municipality's website	Active Living Coordinator	
	b. Maintain and expand the municipality's social media presence	Recreation Program Coordinator, Recreation Admin Assistant, Active Living Coordinator	
	c. Promote physical activity opportunities on local radio	Recreation Program Coordinator, Active Living Coordinator	CKBW, Hank FM
	d. Support South Shore Connect.ca	Active Living Coordinator	South Shore Active Communities
	e. Ensure each issue of the recreation guide and Municipal Matters newsletter has information on physical activity and active transportation	Recreation Program Coordinator, Active Living Coordinator	Administration department
	f. Distribute information at community events	Active Living Coordinator	

	g. Promote active transportation opportunities and benefits	Active Living Coordinator	South Shore Active Communities, Bridgewater Active Transportation Committee
	h. Develop and distribute information on parks, trails, and programs	Recreation Program Coordinator, Trails & Open Space Coordinator, Active Living Coordinator	
	i. Develop and distribute information on physical activity opportunities	Recreation Program Coordinator, Active Living Coordinator	
	j. Promote services available through municipal Recreation department	Recreation Director, Recreation Program Coordinator, Recreation Admin Assistant, Active Living Coordinator	
<b>2. Develop a communications plan for the Active Living Strategy</b>			
	a. Create and promote branding for the Active Living Strategy	Active Living Coordinator	Active Living Committee

<b>POLICY AND PLANNING</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead(s)</b>	<b>Partner(s)</b>
<b>1. Increase and improve policy development to support physical activity.</b>			
	a. Pass a municipal active transportation policy	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Active Living Committee, Municipal Council
	b. Work with other municipal policies and departments to integrate physical activity and active transportation supportive policies in the whole of the municipality	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Active Living Committee, Senior Management Team, Municipal Council

2. Improve access to physical activity opportunities.			
	a. Continue to support PRO Kids	Recreation Program Coordinator, Active Living Coordinator	Municipal Council
	b. Improve access to and promotion of grant opportunities for physical activity initiatives	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Active Living Committee, Municipal Council
	c. Improve awareness of municipal policies that support physical activity	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Active Living Committee, Senior Management Team, Municipal Council
3. Improve partnerships to achieve goals in physical activity.			
	a. In partnership with Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, provide leadership on Active Living Strategy via Active Living Coordinator	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Department of Health and Wellness, Active Living Committee, Municipal Council
	b. Ensure implementation and evaluation of Active Living Strategy	Recreation Director, Active Living Coordinator	Department of Health and Wellness, Active Living Committee, Municipal Council

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Public meeting locations

District	Date	Location	Time	Attendance
1	February 18	Lunenburg & District Fire Hall	7:00-8:30pm	4
2	February 20	Riverport & District Community Hall	7:00-8:30pm	4
3	January 13	Dayspring & District Community Hall	7:00-8:30pm	4
4	January 14	Blockhouse Fire Hall	7:00-8:30pm	5
5	January 21	Northfield District Fire Hall	7:00-8:30pm	2
6	January 23	Parkdale/Maplewood Community Hall	7:00-8:30pm	15
7	January 28	New Germany Legion, Branch 102	7:00-8:30pm	7
8	January 29	Tri District Fire Hall #3	7:00-8:30pm	3
9	February 4	Midville Branch Fire Hall	7:00-8:30pm	3
10	February 6	Italy Cross/Middlewood Fire Hall	7:00-8:30pm	3
11	February 10	Pleasantville Fire Hall	7:00-8:30pm	4
12	February 12	Petite Rivière Fire Hall	7:00-8:30pm	6

## Appendix 2: Focus group questions

### 1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- a. **Purpose of discussion:** The purpose of this session is to get feedback from community members on their experience with physical activity in their community. We want to hear from everyone on their experiences, regardless of individual physical activity levels.
- b. **Procedural issues:**
  - i. Importance of participation and candor
    - **Anonymity:** only need to disclose your first name for discussion purposes, but can disclose any amount that makes you comfortable. We ask that you do not disclose anyone else's identity without their permission.
  - ii. No right or wrong answers, openness to disagreement, be respectful of others.



- iii. Definition of community – what is your opinion? Is community an interest group or geographic boundary? (have the group come to consensus)
- iv. Need to stay within our time constraints, and need to cover certain topics, so there may be times when I need to indicate that we need to move on – please take no offence.
- v. Location of washrooms.

**c. Participant introductions:**

- i. First name
- ii. Organization you represent (if applicable)
- iii. Family characteristics (if applicable)
- iv. Favourite leisure time activity

**2. Warm-up (5 minutes)**

- a. Are Nova Scotians generally physically active?
- b. What does being physically active mean to you?
  - i. What types of activities? How long?

**3. You and Your Community (15 minutes)**

- a. How would you describe how physical activity fits into your community?
  - i. Is it a priority? For whom – leadership **and/or** community members?
    - 1. Is it any different from 5 years ago?
  - ii. Is it part of everyday life for community members?
    - 1. Is it any different from 5 years ago?
  - iii. What are the benefits of being physically active for you and others you know?
- b. How do you get involved?
- c. What is it that you like about this?
- d. Is there anything your interest group has to overcome to participate?

**4. Opportunities (20 minutes)**

- a. Where do people in your community go to be physically active?
  - i. What physical activities are available there?
  - ii. What do people like about these places?

- iii. How might these places be improved?
- b. To what extent to people in your community use walking or bicycling as a way to get physically active?
  - i. How much of this is to reach a destination, **versus** solely for fun or exercise?
    - 1. Should walking and bicycling to reach a destination be encouraged more in your community? How come?
  - ii. What might encourage people in your community to walk or bicycle more?
  - iii. What might prevent people in your community from walking and bicycling more?
- c. Do people in your community get physical activity by participating in cultural activities?
  - i. What cultural activities are important here?
    - 1. Are there any physical activities as part of these?
  - ii. What are the benefits of being physically active through cultural activities?
  - iii. How could cultural activities be modified to encourage more physical activities?
  - iv. What are the challenges associated with connecting cultural activities to physical activity for your community?

## 5. Challenges and Barriers (15 minutes)

- a. What deters people from being physically active in your community?
  - i. Is there anything about Nova Scotia in general that can prevent people from being physically active?
  - ii. Are there personal challenges or barriers to physical activity people have in your community?
    - 1. Cost, social, skills, not fun, not interested, health issues, schedule
  - iii. Is there anything about your community that could prevent people from being more physically active?
    - 1. Facilities not well maintained, safety, information, not enough spaces
  - iv. What could change to encourage greater physical activity in your community?

- b. What are your suggestions for removing barriers and challenges to physical activity?

**6. Accessibility (10 minutes)**

- a. What does accessibility mean to you?
- b. How would you know if a facility or program was accessible?
  - i. What factors make a place accessible?
- c. How accessible are the physical activity facilities and programs in your community?
  - i. What makes them accessible?
  - ii. What are the barriers to accessibility?
  - iii. How could accessibility be improved?

**7. Communications (10 minutes)**

- a. How do you usually hear about physical activity opportunities or events in your community?
  - i. What are your suggestions for improving communication about physical activity in your community?
  - ii. What are barriers to communication? How could those barriers be addressed?