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AARP Bulletin Survey On Exercise

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Physical fitness has increasingly become part of the discussion on the health and well-being of Americans. As the New Year approaches, many adults make the resolution to become more physically active. The *AARP Bulletin* commissioned a nationwide survey in November 2011 to assess the level of physical activity among adults age 45 and older. Respondents were asked about their current level of physical activity, their favorite type of physical activity, time spent exercising per week, and if they are more or less physically active than they were five years ago. The survey was conducted for AARP by Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS), an independent research firm. Interviews were conducted November 18-27, 2011 among a nationally representative sample adults age 45 and older. The key findings are presented below followed by more detailed analysis, including a comparison with data collected in August 2009 for the AARP report, *Calling All Sports Fans: A Bulletin Poll*.

Key Findings

- Just over seven in 10 adults age 45+ (71%) say they are currently physically active.
- Fewer than one in 10 adults age 45+ (9%) say they plan to start engaging in regular physical activity in the next month (5%) or the next six months (4%).
- Roughly one in five adults age 45+ (19%) say they do not currently engage in regular physical activity and do not have plans to start doing so.
- Walking is the most popular form of exercise among adults age 45+ who are physically active on a regular basis. In fact, half (50%) say their favorite type of exercise is walking, as opposed to bicycling (6%), using an elliptical machine, stair climber or treadmill (5%), weight lifting or weight training (3%), gardening (3%), doing work or manual labor (3%), and team sports (3%).
- Over half (53%) of adults age 45+ who said they are physically active on a regular basis accumulate four hours or more a week of physical activity.
- The majority of adults age 45+ (61%) report that their current level of physical activity was less than it was five years ago.

Detailed Findings

Current Physical Activity

Just over seven in 10 (71%) adults age 45+ say they are currently physically active. This includes 61% who say they have been physically active on a regular basis for more than a year and 9% who say they have been active for less than a year.

These figures are similar to 2009 when 66% of adults age 45+ said they had been physically active on a regular basis, including 61% who said they had been physically active on a regular basis for more than a year and 5% who said they had been active for less than a year.

Currently, roughly two in 10 (19%) adults age 45+ say they do not engage in regular physical activity. This figure was slightly higher in 2009 when 25% said they do not engage in regular physical activity.

Nearly one in 10 (9%) adults age 45+ say they plan to start engaging in regular physical activity, including 5% who plan to start exercising regularly in the next month and 4% who plan to start in the next six months. This is close to the figures in 2009 when 7% of adults age 45+ said they planned to start engaging in regular physical activity, including 4% who planned to start in the next month and 3% who planned to start in the next six months.

As shown in the following table, there has not been much change in physical activity level among adults under 65 years old. However, there has been a statistically significant change among those age 65+. In 2009, 55% said they had been physically active on a regular basis compared with 66% who say this in 2011. Similarly, the percentage who said they were not currently engaged in regular physical activity (and did not plan to start) dropped from 38% in 2009 to 26% in 2011.

	Total	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
Have been physically active on a regular basis (for less than a year or for the last year or more)				
2009	66% (n=510)	74% (n=200)	67% (n=153)	55% (n=158)
2011	71% (n=1000)	73% (n=261)	73% (n=273)	66% (n=449)
Not currently engaged in regular physical activity (and don't plan to start)				
2009	25%	16%	24%	38%
2011	19%	14%	18%	26%
Plan to start engaging in regular physical activity (in the next month or the next six months)				
2009	7%	8%	9%	4%
2011	9%	12%	8%	6%

Favorite Type of Exercise

Of respondents who are physically active on a regular basis (n=704), half (50%) say their favorite type of exercise is walking, as opposed to bicycling (6%), using an elliptical machine, stair climber, or treadmill (5%), weight lifting or weight training (3%), gardening (3%), doing manual labor (3%), team sports (3%), and other types of physical activity (6%). The preference for walking is stronger among adults at least 55 years old who are physically active: while nearly four in 10 (42%) adults age 45 to 54 said walking was their favorite type of exercise, this figure increases to 54% among adults age 55 to 64, and to 55% among adults age 65+. More physically active adults in 2011 say walking is their favorite type of physical activity than said it in 2009 (45%). In comparison, more physically active adults in 2009 said their favorite physical activity was weight- lifting (8%), running/jogging (6%), and other types of physical activity (9%) compared with 2011.

Time Spent on Physical Activity

Over half (53%) of adults age 45+ who say they are physically active on a regular basis accumulate four hours or more a week of physical activity. One in three adults (29%) who exercise on a regular basis, accumulate between two and four hours of physical activity. Sixteen percent of adults who are physically active on a regular basis accumulate between one-half and two hours of physical activity, and two percent of adults who exercise regularly exercise less than one-half hour. There is no variation among age groups, except among adults who exercise regularly and accumulate four hours or more of

physical activity in one week. More adults age 55 to 64 accumulate four hours or more of physical activity than adults age 65+ (57% versus 49%).

As shown in the table below, the amount of exercise reported among people who are physically active has not changed much since 2009, with the exception of those age 65+. In 2009, 57% of adults age 65+ who were physically active reported four hours or more of physical activity in one week, compared with 49% of adults age 65+ who are physically active in 2011.

	Total	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
Less than one-half hour				
2009	3% (n=341)	-% (n=148)	9% (n=102)	-% (n=88)
2011	2% (n=704)	4% (n=197)	<0.1% (n=202)	2% (n=294)
Between one-half and two hours				
2009	15%	15%	15%	17%
2011	16%	16%	16%	18%
Between two and four hours				
2009	25%	28%	21%	25%
2011	29%	27%	27%	30%
Four hours or more				
2009	57%	57%	55%	57%
2011	53%	53%	57%	49%

Current Level of Physical Activity

The majority of adults report a decline in their level of exercise. Just over six in 10 (61%) report that their current level of physical activity is less than it was five years ago, which is similar to the percentage of adults (62%) in 2009 who reported the same. More adults (73%) age 65+ say they are less physically active than they were five years ago than any other age group. Conversely, more adults age 45 to 54 (40%) say they are more physically active than they were five years ago than adults over 55 years old. These findings are consistent with 2009 figures.

Survey methodology

The survey was conducted for AARP by Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS), an independent research firm. Interviews were conducted November 18-27, 2011 among a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults age 45 and older. The margin of error for total respondents is +/- 3.10% at the 95% confidence level.

Bulletin Survey on Exercise Annotated Questionnaire

This study was conducted for AARP via telephone by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted from November 18 – November 27, 2011 among a nationally representative sample of 1,000 respondents age 45 and older. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-3.10% at the 95% confidence level.

1. What is your current level of physical activity? Would you say...?

	11/27/11 (N=1000)	45-54 (N=261)	55-64 (N=273)	65+ (N=449)
You don't currently engage in regular physical activity	19	14	18	26
Plan to start (NET)	9	12	8	6
You don't right now, but plan to start in the next month	5	6	7	2
You don't right now, but plan to start in the next six months	4	6	1	4
Physically active (NET)	71	73	73	66
You have been physically active on a regular basis for less than a year	9	8	12	8
You have been physically active on a regular basis for the last year or more	61	65	61	58
Don't know	1	1	*	1
Refused	1	-	1	1

2. (Asked of total who have been physically active on a regular basis) What is your favorite type of exercise?

	11/27/11 (N=704)	45-54 (N=197)	55-64 (N=202)	65+ (N=294)
Bicycling	6	6	10	3
Dancing/aerobic dancing	4	3	4	3
Elliptical machine/stair climber/treadmill	5	8	2	4
Golf	1	1	1	2
Team sports (baseball, soccer, volleyball, basketball)	3	5	-	2
Hiking	1	1	2	1
Running/jogging	5	10	3	2
Swimming/water aerobics	3	3	3	4
Tennis	1	*	*	1
Walking	50	42	54	55
Weight-lifting/weight training	3	5	2	3
Yoga	1	-	1	1
Gardening/yard work	3	2	2	4
Work/manual labor	3	2	4	3
Gym activities (unspecified)	1	-	1	1
Skiing	1	1	1	-
Cardio activities (various)	1	1	1	*
Outdoor activities (unspecified)	2	2	2	3
Other	6	6	4	7
Don't know	1	2	*	1
Refused	*	-	1	1

Q1 & Q2 Combination Table

	11/27/11 (N=1000)	45-54 (N=261)	55-64 (N=273)	65+ (N=449)
Don't currently engage in regular physical activity	19	14	18	26
Plan to start	9	12	8	6
Physically active on a regular basis (NET)	71	73	73	66
Favorite exercise is Bicycling	4	4	7	2
Favorite exercise is Dancing/aerobic dancing	2	2	3	2
Favorite exercise is Elliptical machine/stair climber/treadmill	4	6	2	3
Favorite exercise is Golf	1	1	1	2
Favorite exercise is Team sports (baseball, soccer, volleyball, basketball)	2	4	-	1
Favorite exercise is Hiking	1	1	1	1
Favorite exercise is Running/jogging	4	7	2	1
Favorite exercise is Swimming/water aerobics	2	2	2	2
Favorite exercise is Tennis	*	*	*	1
Favorite exercise is Walking	35	31	39	36
Favorite exercise is Weight-lifting/weight training	2	4	2	2
Favorite exercise is Yoga	*	-	1	*
Favorite exercise is Gardening/yard work	2	1	2	2
Favorite exercise is Work/manual labor	2	2	3	2
Favorite exercise is Gym activities (unspecified)	*	-	*	1
Favorite exercise is Skiing	*	1	1	-
Favorite exercise is Cardio activities (various)	1	1	1	*
Favorite exercise is Outdoor activities (unspecified)	2	2	2	2
Favorite exercise is Other	4	4	3	5
Don't know	1	1	*	1
Refused	1	-	1	1

3. (Asked of total who have been physically active on a regular basis) Please estimate how much physical activity you accumulate in one week. Do you accumulate...?

	Less than one-half hour	Between one-half and two hours	Between two and four hours	Four hours or more	Don't know/Refused
11/27/11 (N=704)	2	16	29	53	*
Age 45-54 (N=197)	4	16	27	53	-
Age 55-64 (N=202)	*	16	27	57	-
Age 65+ (N=294)	2	18	30	49	1

Q1 & Q3 Combination Table

	11/27/11 (N=1000)	45-54 (N=261)	55-64 (N=273)	65+ (N=449)
Don't currently engage in regular physical activity	19	14	18	26
Plan to start (NET)	9	12	8	6
Physically active on a regular basis (NET)	71	73	73	66
Accumulate less than one-half hours of physical activity in one week	1	3	*	1
Accumulate between one-half and 2 hours of physical activity in one week	11	12	11	12
Accumulate between 2 and 4 hours of physical activity in one week	20	20	20	20
Accumulate 4 or more hours of physical activity in one week	37	39	41	33
Don't know	1	1	*	1
Refused	1	-	1	1

4. Is your current level of physical activity more or less than it was 5 years ago?

	More	Less	Don't know	Refused
11/27/11 (N=1000)	31	61	6	1
Age 45-54 (N=261)	40	53	6	1
Age 55-64 (N=273)	33	59	6	2
Age 65+ (N=449)	19	73	6	1

Data Tables From Calling All Sports Fans: A Bulletin Poll

This study was conducted for AARP via telephone by International Communications Research, Inc. (ICR) in August 2009 among a nationally representative sample of 510 respondents age 45 and older. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-4% at the 95% confidence level

Current Level of Physical Activity				
	Total	Age 45-54 (n=200)	Age 55-64 (n=153)	Age 65+ (n=158)
I don't currently engage in regular physical activity	25%	16%	24%	38%
I don't right now, but plan to start in the next six months	3%	2%	5%	3%
I don't right now, but plan to start in the next month	4%	6% ^c	4% ^c	<1%
I've been physically active on a regular basis for less than a year	5%	7%	5%	3%
I've been physically active on a regular basis for the last year or more	61%	67%	62%	52%
Favorite Type of Exercise Among Those Who Exercise Regularly				
	Total	Age 45-54 (n=148)	Age 55-64 (n=102)	Age 65+ (n=88)
Bicycling	5%	5%	4%	8%
Dancing/aerobic dancing	3%	5%	3%	2%
Elliptical machine/stair climber/treadmill	3%	4%	1%	4%
Golf	3%	1%	4%	7%
Team sports (baseball, basketball, soccer, volleyball)	3%	6%	1%	1%
Hiking	1%	---	---	4%
Running/jogging	6%	10%	4%	4%
Swimming/water aerobics	3%	5%	1%	3%
Tennis	1%	1%	---	1%
Walking	45%	39%	49%	51%
Weight lifting/weight training	2%	11%	7%	4%
Yoga	2%	---	2%	4%
Gardening/working outdoors	2%	3%	1%	3%
Wii Fit	1%	3%	---	---
Estimation of How Much Physical Activity Accumulated in One Week Among Those Who Exercise Regularly				
	Total	Age 45-54 (n=148)	Age 55-64 (n=102)	Age 65+ (n=88)
Less than one-half hour	3%	----	9%	----
Between one-half and two hours	15%	15%	15%	17%
Between two and four hours	25%	28%	21%	25%
Four hours or more	57%	57%	55%	57%
Current Level of Physical Activity Relative to Five Years Ago				
	Total	Age 45-54 (n=200)	Age 55-64 (n=153)	Age 65+ (n=158)
More	30%	38%	31%	19%
Less	62%	55%	61%	73%