

ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults

Fact Sheet – Key Findings & Recommendations

ParticipACTION is releasing the first-ever **Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults in Canada**. Led by a team of Canadian researchers and stakeholders in the field of adult physical activity, the Adult Report Card represents a comprehensive synthesis of the literature and national surveys.

The Adult Report Card shows, Canadians need to make physical activity a key part of their everyday routines so they can Age Better. Physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour can lead to an increased risk of chronic diseases, cognitive decline, slips and falls, and social isolation. Encouragingly, research also shows that even small steps can make a difference in helping adults stay strong in mind and body, maintain mobility and build relationships.

Understanding the Adult Report Card Grades:

Letter grades were assigned by the team of researchers based on an examination of current data for each indicator, where available, against a benchmark or optimal scenario. Together, the 13 indicators analyzed provide an assessment of how we are doing as a country regarding the promotion and facilitation of physical activity among adults in Canada.

Highlights of Adult Report Card Grades – Individual and Community:

- **D for Overall Physical Activity**

The overall physical activity grade is based on a combination of four distinct indicators, which include:

- Daily Movement
- Moderate-to-Vigorous Physical Activity
- Muscle- and Bone-Strengthening Activities
- Balance-Training Activitiesⁱ

- **F for Moderate-to-Vigorous Physical Activity (MVPA)**

Based on objectively measured data, 16.4% of Canadians 18 to 79 years achieve the guideline of at least 150 minutes of MVPA a week.ⁱⁱ

- **C for Daily Movement**

Current evidence suggests that adults who achieve >7,500 steps per day are likely meeting MVPA guidelines (150 minutes per week). Only 52% of adults 18 years or older in Canada take at least 7,500 steps per day. A further 29% fall within the low active lifestyle category (5,000 – 7,499 steps/day).

- **B- for Sleep**

The National Sleep Foundation recommends adults 18 to 64 years sleep for 7 to 9 hours a day, and adults 65 years or older sleep for 7 to 8 hours per day. Being physically active can

support improvements in sleep. Approximately 64% of adults 18 to 79 years meet the sleep duration recommendations, and adults achieve 7 hours of sleep per day on average.

- **B+ for Intentions**

Three-quarters of adults in Canada (74%) indicate they have strong intentions to be physically active within the next six months.

Some indicators received an incomplete (INC) grade as limited national data currently exists. More research is needed to confirm how adults in Canada are doing in areas like:

- **INC for Muscle and Bone Strength**

The physical activity guidelines recommend performing muscular activities to increase muscle strength and endurance at least two times per week.

- **INC for Balance**

The physical activity guidelines for older adults recommend that those with poor mobility perform physical activities to enhance balance and prevent falls.

- **INC for Sedentary Behavior**

Adults achieving less than 5,000 steps per day are considered to have a sedentary lifestyle. An estimated 18% of adults in Canada 18 years and older achieve less than 5,000 steps per day, and adults 18 to 79 years or older are sedentary for close to 10 hours per day on average, excluding sleep time.

Highlights of Adult Report Card Grades – Structural and System-Wide:

- **B- for Community and Environment**

Thirty-five per cent of communities have indicated that they have a formal strategy to support physical activity and 22% have a formal active transportation plan.ⁱⁱⁱ

- **C- for Health & Primary Care Settings**

Forty per cent of adults have heard about physical activity from a health professional in the past 12 months, with the percentage of adults 65 years or older who have heard that being higher (52%) compared to those 25 to 44 years (34%).^{iv}

- **B- for Strategies & Investments**

Canada is committed to the WHO Global Action Plan for Physical Activity (2018-2030) and the 2019 federal budget proposes that \$30 million be provided over five years to enable sport organizations in Canada to promote accessible, ethical, equitable and safe sports for families, athletes and coaches.^v

- **INC for Social Support**

In order to achieve behaviour change of whole populations, physical inactivity needs to be de-normalized and physical activity needs to be re-normalized; this can be accomplished by

changing norms and beliefs and by providing *direct support* for modifying environments and policies to encourage physical activity.^{vi, vii}

- **INC for Workplace**

Considering the amount of time individuals spend at work, the Adult Report Card recommends workplaces create policies and programs to increase employees' physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviours.

When you get active, age is just a number:

Physical inactivity can lead to increased risk of chronic diseases, cognitive decline, falls and social isolation among older adults.^{viii} It's time Canadians make physical activity part of their everyday routine because everything gets better when you get active

It's never too late to start sitting less and moving more. Simple steps include:

- Move throughout the day – including active transportation, daily chores, gardening or walking the family pet.
- Try something new –once you find an activity you like, stick with it.
- Up the intensity – try to do the same task or walk the same path in less time each time you do it – bonus if you can add an incline or steps.
- Ask others to join in – make it social.
- Break up extended periods of sitting with movement – make it a “walking meeting” at work. Waiting for a commercial or an ad to load? Make it a moving moment.
- Add strength training to your routine two to three times a week.

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Visit [ParticipACTION.com](https://www.participaction.com) to see the full Adult Report Card and learn how an active life is a better life.

ⁱ ParticipACTION. Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults. (2019).

ⁱⁱ Clarke J, Colley R, Janssen I, Tremblay MS. Accelerometer-measured moderate-to-vigorous physical activity of Canadian adults, 2007 to 2017. *Health Rep.* 2019;30(8):3-10.

ⁱⁱⁱ Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. The 2015 Survey of Physical Activity Opportunities in Canadian Communities.

^{iv} Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. sub-sample of 2014-2015 Physical Activity Monitor.

^v Government of Canada. Budget 2019: Table of contents. Government of Canada. Ottawa: ON. 2019. <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2019/docs/plan/toc-tdm-en.html>. Published March 19, 2019. Accessed September 23, 2019.

^{vi} Yun L, Vanderloo L, Berry TR, et al. Assessing the social climate of physical (in)activity in Canada. *BMC Public Health.* 2018;18(1):1301.

^{vii} Sallis JF, Owen N, Fisher E. Ecological models of health behavior. *Health behavior: Theory, research, and practice.* 2015;5(43-64).

^{viii} ParticipACTION. Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults. (2019).