



WellSpring

Sharing physical activity knowledge

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Better with age: Move more today for a healthier tomorrow

The 2019 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults

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Introduction

Research continues to demonstrate the numerous health benefits of living a physically active life, especially as we age. Aging is an inevitable part of life. Staying active throughout the lifespan can help reduce the risk of premature mortality and developing a variety of chronic diseases and health conditions (e.g., cardiovascular disease, some cancers, type 2 diabetes, and stroke), as well as cognitive or mental health conditions (e.g., dementia, anxiety, and depression).¹⁻⁴ Moreover, embracing daily movement can help adults and older adults stay healthy, mobile, independent, and mentally well.

Report card development process

The Centre for Active Living and the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI) served as strategic partners for the research and content development of ParticipACTION's 2019 Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults. Chaired by the Centre for Active Living, a Report Card Research Committee (RCRC)—made up of 16 stakeholders and researchers in physical activity, recreation, and sport from across Canada—was created to aid with the conceptualization and identification of indicators, data sources, and grade assignment. CFLRI also played a key role in gathering and analyzing data used in the report card.

Adopted from the 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth,⁵ a letter grading framework (Table 1) was used by the RCRC to support consensus decision-making. For each indicator, data were reviewed and discussed against a pre-defined benchmark or optimal scenario. Key considerations were factored into grading including the quality of the compiled evidence and disparities across the lifespan (adults, 18-64 years, and older adults, 65+ years).

S U M M A R Y

The inaugural edition of the ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults represents a targeted and purposeful synthesis of the literature and data sources.

The purpose of this WellSpring is to provide an overview of the development process and to summarize the results 2019 ParticipACTION Report Card for Adults.

Table 1. Overview of Grading Scheme

A	B	C	D	F	INC
A+ 94–100%	B+ 74–79%	C+ 54–59%	D+ 34–39%		
A 87–93%	B 67–73%	C 47–53%	D 27–33%	F 0–19%	Incomplete data
A– 80–86%	B– 60–66%	C– 40–46%	D– 20–26%		

Note: A grade of INC indicates that there was insufficient data (or data of poor quality) to assign a letter grade.

Daily behaviours

Overall physical activity

Physical activity is a critical factor in maintaining the physical, social, and economic wellness of our aging population, allowing adults living in Canada to age better and maintain a high quality of life. In short, everything gets better when you are active. The best way to remain healthy is to be active. Unfortunately, not nearly enough adults are active enough. The data on physical activity for adults (18–64 years) and older adults (≥65 years) are concerning. The majority of adults and older adults living in Canada are not meeting the physical activity recommendations of 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each week,^{6,7} with only 16% meeting these recommendations.⁸ The good news is that 52% of adults are achieving ≥7,500 steps per day, which falls within the “physically active” lifestyle category.⁹

Exercise programs that combine both balance and strength activities are most effective to prevent falls.¹⁰ The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that adults engage in bone and muscle strengthening activities at least two days per week, and for older adults with poor mobility issues, to engage in activities that enhance balance and prevent falls.^{6,7} However, we do not have data on adults and older adults performing muscle and bone strengthening activities, nor do we know how many older adults are performing balance activities. This creates a narrow picture of whether Canadians meet the full recommendations of the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults⁶ and Older Adults.⁵



Sedentary behaviours

Although many health benefits are achieved through a physically active lifestyle, being sedentary for extended periods of time (e.g., sitting while watching television or using a computer) can increase the risk of many chronic conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and even some cancers.^{11,12} At this time, Canada does not have sedentary behaviour guidelines for adults and older adults. However, we do know that adults, 18–79 years, are sedentary 9.6 hours per day (excluding sleep time).¹³

Daily Behaviours

The overall physical activity grade is based on a combination of four distinct indicators: Daily Movement, Moderate-to-Vigorous Physical Activity, Muscle & Bone Strength, and Balance.

Overall Physical Activity:

D

Daily Movement:

C

Moderate-to-Vigorous Physical Activity:

F

Muscle & Bone Strength:

INC

Balance:

INC

Sedentary Behaviours:

INC

Sleep:

B–

Sleep

Sleep behaviour is recognized as an important determinant of overall health and wellbeing.¹⁴⁻¹⁶ Sixty-five percent of adults, 18-79 years of age, meet sleep duration recommendations, with the average adult sleeping 7.2 hours per night.^{17,18} Being active can support improvements in sleep, and sleeping well can support having enough energy each day to be physically active.

Individual characteristics

Intentions

Adults should be moving more and sitting less to maintain their health, and for the majority of Canadians, that is their intention. Seventy-four percent of adults indicate that they fully intend to be physically active within the next 6 months.¹⁹ The relationship between intention and behaviour has shown to be a positive link.²⁰⁻²³

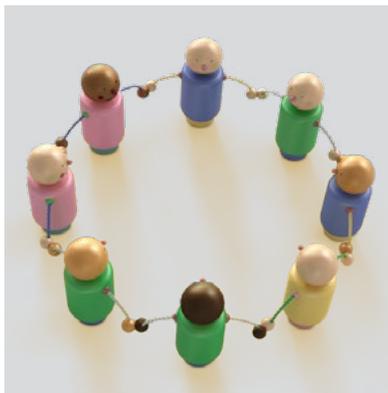
We also know that physical literacy is critical to healthy, active aging.²⁴ Physical literacy is defined as the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for maintaining purposeful physical pursuits throughout life.

Settings and sources of influence

Social support

To achieve behaviour change among adults, physical activity needs to be normalized. This can be accomplished by changing norms and beliefs and by providing direct support for modifying environments and policies to encourage physical activity.^{25,26}

Unfortunately, limited data are available to provide a full understanding of the Canadian picture of social support that individuals receive from family, peers, or other key individuals to be physically active.



Workplace

No recent national data are available to grade the current workplace context. What we do know is that given the amount of time Canadian adults spend at work, it is the ideal setting to support opportunities to be more physically active and less sedentary throughout the day. This can be provided through awareness and education opportunities as well as social and organizational supports via leadership capacity and infrastructure, community assets and partnerships, and policies and programs.

Community & environment

The relationship between the environment (both built and natural) and physical activity has been linked to better health and a stronger sense of belonging.²⁷⁻³⁶ Given the need to increase population levels of physical activity, communities and the built environment are critical elements of increasing activity levels. Key items examined were active transportation plans and infrastructure, supports and information, policies, strategies, community plans, and facilities. Each contribute to overall physical activity opportunities for Canadians in their communities.

Individual Characteristics

Intentions:

B+

Settings & Sources of Influence

Social Support:

INC

Workplace:

INC

Community & Environment:

B-

Health & Primary Care Settings:

C-

Strategies & Investments:

Government:

B-

Health & primary care setting

The healthcare setting is an opportune avenue for physical activity promotion to adults living in Canada. Forty percent of adults have heard about physical activity from a health professional.¹⁹ Physicians and other healthcare providers are well-respected in providing health advice and have regular contact with their patients. Research has shown that physicians who provide advice or counselling can result in positive effects in activity levels.³⁷

Strategies and investments

Government

There is strong leadership and commitment in promoting physical activity opportunities at the federal level. To increase activity levels, it is critical that policies, leadership, and funding strategies are aligned for the implementation of physical activity promotion, strategies, and initiatives for adults of all ages, abilities, and cultures.

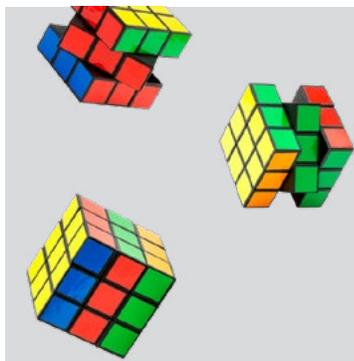
Recommendations

The inactivity crisis is a complex issue that requires a complex remedy. A comprehensive and coordinated solution that involves multiple partners in a variety of organizations and all orders of government is needed. It is necessary to align efforts and draw on research to inform future policies and programming.

Additional research is also needed to help Canadian adults live more active lives. From identifying the barriers to creating more supportive environments to enhancing opportunities to get active, more detailed surveys and research can help promote sustained active living for all adults and help more Canadians live their best life possible.

ParticipACTION has developed support material to help you use the Report Card and facilitate your efforts to “improve the grades” for adults and older adults. Currently, the following tools are available:

- 2019 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults
- Supplementary Data Document
- Infographic
- Social Media Kit
- Press Release
- Fact Sheet



Nora Johnston, MA, is focused on leading the Centre toward its mission of promoting active living by bridging research practice, and decision-making. She is also Chair of the Report Card Research Committee.



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About the 2019 Report Card

ParticipACTION has been encouraging Canadians to get healthy by getting active since 1971. As part of that work, ParticipACTION has published a series of report cards on children and youth physical activity. This is the first report card that examines physical activity of adults and older adults. This project relies on two strategic partners: the Centre for Active Living, to research, develop, and communicate the report card; and the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, to provide the data on which the report card is based. Production of the ParticipACTION report card has been made possible through financial support from Public Health Agency of Canada. Additional support was provided by Sport Canada.

The 2019 ParticipACTION Report Card for Physical Activity on Adults is available at: www.participaction.com/en-ca/resources/adult-report-card

Want to know more?

Contact ParticipACTION at:

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