

MOVING BEYOND STAGNATION:

Elevating Physical
Activity in Canada

2025 ParticipACTION Report Card
on Physical Activity for Adults



PARTICIPACTION

Let's make room to move

ABOUT THE PARTICIPACTION ADULT REPORT CARD

The ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults is the most comprehensive assessment of adult physical activity in Canada. It summarizes data from many sources, including the best available peer-reviewed research, to assign evidence-based grades across 17 indicators. Together, the indicators provide a complete and strong assessment of how Canada is doing as a country when it comes to promoting and facilitating physical activity among adults.

Grading scheme:

A	B	C	D	F	INC
A+ : 94-100%	B+ : 74-79%	C+ : 54-59%	D+ : 34-39%	F : 0-19%	A grade of incomplete (INC) indicates that there were insufficient or poor-quality data to assign a letter grade.
A : 87-93%	B : 67-73%	C : 47-53%	D : 27-33%		
A- : 80-86%	B- : 60-66%	C- : 40-46%	D- : 20-26%		

Note: This is the summarized version of the ParticipACTION Adult Report Card. To view the full 66-page version, visit [ParticipACTION.com/The-Science/Adult-Report-Card](https://participaction.com/The-Science/Adult-Report-Card).



MOVING BEYOND STAGNATION: ELEVATING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN CANADA

There's something we need to talk about: physical activity levels in Canada have been low and stagnant for years.

Physical inactivity isn't just a personal health issue — it's a pressing public health concern. Low levels of physical activity are linked to higher risk of chronic disease, anxiety, depression and premature death. But the impacts don't stop there. Physical inactivity also drives up health-care costs, reduces productivity and weakens the social fabric of our communities.

The 2025 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults reveals that only 46% of adults living in Canada are meeting physical activity guidelines* — a number that has barely changed over time. The Report Card also shows that just 22% of communities (of at least 1,000 people) in Canada have a formal strategy for physical activity and sport. Meanwhile, many adults in Canada continue to struggle with insufficient sleep and fall short of daily step recommendations.

At a time when Canada is striving to build resilience, reduce public spending and unite people from coast to coast to coast, these findings are more than just data — they're a call to action and a **foundation for progress that we need to build upon**. Movement underpins public health, economic growth and social connection, and reaching a plateau in physical activity levels reveals the truth: **physical activity must be made a national priority**.

The meaning of stagnation

The persistent lack of progress reflects how our modern lifestyles, driven by technological conveniences and shaped by systemic design, have socially engineered movement out of our daily routines. While there are important accessibility and efficiency benefits to being able to do things like shop, learn, bank, communicate online and from home, drive to work, and use escalators and moving sidewalks, we must acknowledge their undesirable impact on daily movement behaviours when they become the default way of carrying out our to-do lists.



*Doing at least 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per week.

Stagnation simultaneously reveals that the list of barriers — such as time, cost, energy, motivation, and lack of access to public facilities and active transportation — is getting longer, and that there's only so much that individuals and organizations can do without increased support. It also draws attention to Canada's investments in physical activity, which, although well intentioned, have often been short term and distributed in a fragmented fashion among organizations and sectors. While these efforts have provided opportunities for micro-advancements, stop-start programmatic support and investments can create gaps and stunt momentum. The result? Increasing physical activity in Canada is like **pushing a boulder uphill**: slow, full of setbacks and far too heavy for any one person, organization or sector to do alone.

Beyond the hindrances, long-standing physical activity trends unveil the successes and motivation that must be preserved. Despite a growing list of barriers, adults in Canada have demonstrated their adaptability and found ways to get active. Sport, physical activity and recreation organizations across the country have continued to provide meaningful opportunities for people to move more where they live, learn, work and play with minimal resources and unwavering commitment. Canadians and organizations recognize the indisputable benefits of physical activity, and they aren't ready to let the boulder tumble backwards and accept the consequences of physical inactivity.

So, how do we push the boulder beyond the plateau? How do we elevate physical activity in Canada? **We make room to move.**

Changing the unchanged

Change isn't just possible; it's essential.

Government, non-governmental organizations, communities, researchers, the private sector and individuals all have a role to play in creating more room for movement — not just through programs and policies, but by shifting how we design our environments, prioritize our investments and support everyday physical activity.

Employers are well positioned to encourage movement by implementing policies like gym subsidies and paid time off for physical activity, or by encouraging walking/wheeling meetings and providing standing desks and on-site changing and gym facilities, helping to foster workplace cultures that value well-being.

Municipalities can promote active living by investing in infrastructure that improves walkability and creates bike paths. To reduce barriers, these changes must be equitably distributed, especially in underserved and low-income communities, so that everyone can access daily opportunities for physical activity, regardless of income, ability or location.



Active spaces and facilities are more than just places to move — they're vital community hubs that encourage connection and engagement. Prioritizing inclusive design, such as gender-neutral change rooms, accessible entrances and pathways, adequate lighting and clear signage, helps ensure that everyone feels welcome and safe.

City planners can re-imagine outdoor play by designing parks with adults in mind, integrating features scaled for adult use and multi-generational equipment to encourage movement at every age. After all, outdoor play doesn't have to end with childhood.

Provincial, territorial and municipal governments can drive change through policies that span sectors and support physical activity across transportation, urban planning, workplaces and health care. Coordinated efforts, like encouraging active commuting, including physical activity counseling in health care and supporting workplace wellness, can create supportive environments and opportunities that make being active the easy choice.

Sport participation offers adults more than just physical benefits — it fosters connection, reduces stress and can help create a sense of purpose and accomplishment. By offering flexible scheduling and varied formats such as recreational leagues and drop-in play, sport organizations can make participation more appealing and sustainable for busy adults.

At an individual level, adults in Canada can give themselves permission to prioritize movement in their daily lives and schedules. It isn't always easy, but everyone deserves to experience the benefits of an active lifestyle. They can also expand their view of what's considered physical activity — every bit of movement matters, and something is always better than nothing.

Lastly, we're asking the Government of Canada to make steady, long-term investments in physical activity and coordinated plans that hold up as policies evolve. It must also continue to support organizations across the country that turn policies into progress. Other social issues in this country, including recycling or smoking cessation, have benefited from implementing system-changing models and policies with significant investments. They provide key lessons in **collective commitment, endurance and patience** that we can learn from and use to guide how we approach physical activity today.

It's time to move beyond stagnation

Physical inactivity costs Canada **\$3.9 billion in avoidable health-care expenditures** each year.¹ Treating and managing depression alone represents **\$400 million annually**.¹ Inactive employees take **more sick days and are less productive**.² These aren't just health statistics; they're warning signs of how inactivity jeopardizes our economy, communities and resilience.



However, Canada's sport, physical activity and recreation sector contributes an estimated **\$37.2 billion** annually in economic value.¹ Adults who are active daily have a **30% lower risk of depression and dementia**.³ If only **1%** of people living in Canada switched from fossil fuel-powered vehicles to active transportation (i.e., walking, cycling, etc.), it could **save \$564 million annually** by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.¹ **More than 75%** of adults in Canada feel welcomed and included through sport, physical activity and recreation activities.¹ A **15% relative increase in physical activity among adults in Canada** could reduce the economic burdens of treating and managing non-communicable diseases, depression and absenteeism, resulting in **total annual cost savings of almost \$1 billion**.⁴

These numbers aren't just statistics related to physical activity — they're proof that movement is a high-impact, cost-effective solution that drives economic growth, reduces the strain on our health-care system, strengthens communities, improves mental health and even advances climate change action.

The return on investment in physical activity is clear. Now is the time to move beyond stagnation and leverage physical activity as both a personal well-being tool and a powerful policy solution. Making room to move will directly strengthen the foundations of what Canada has committed to building: **a more productive economy, a more sustainable health-care system and a more inclusive, connected society**.

So, let's continue to design the places and build the systems that support movement for everyone.

Let's turn our to-do lists into to-move lists.

Let's integrate physical activity into the core of our policies, programs and daily lives.

Let's make physical activity a national priority and start recognizing it as essential to building a healthier and more prosperous country.

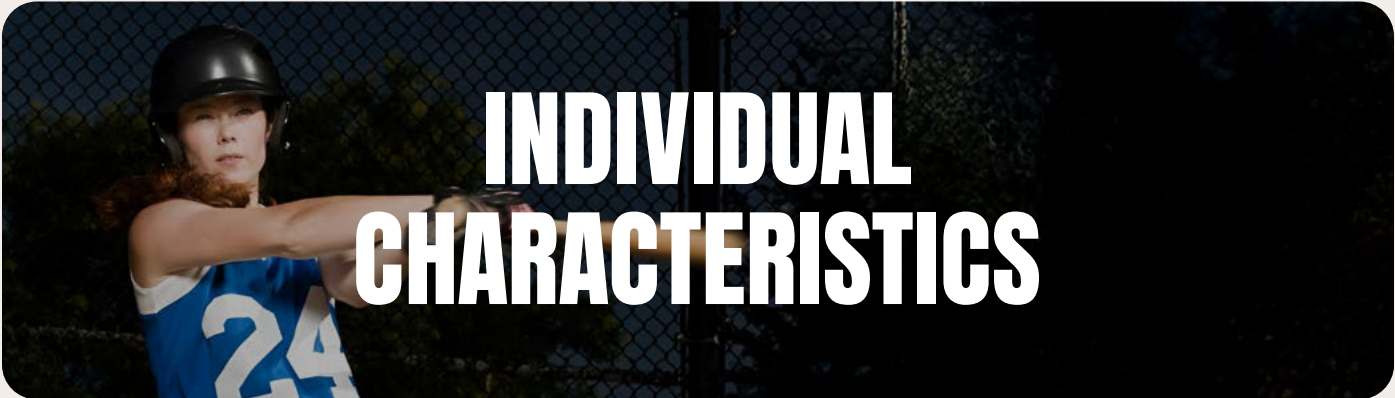
Let's make room to move, Canada!

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Indicator	Key finding	2025
Moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA)	46% of adults met the recommendation of doing at least 150 minutes of MVPA per week. ¹	C-
Total daily steps	32% of adults took at least 7,500 steps per day, which falls within the physically active lifestyle category. ¹	D
Muscle-strengthening activities	35% of adults reported meeting the recommendation of engaging in muscle-strengthening activities using major muscle groups at least twice a week. ¹⁻³	D+
Balance activities	31% of adults 65 years of age and older reported that they performed exercises that challenged their balance (e.g., yoga, dance and balance training) to strengthen their core muscles or lower back to improve their posture. ³	D
Active transportation	46% of adults reported using active transportation (e.g., walked, wheeled, cycled or used public transit) to get to and from destinations (e.g., work, university/college, parks, malls and friends' homes). ¹⁻³	C-
Sport participation	27% of adults reported that they participated in sport in the past 12 months. ⁴	D
Sleep	70% of adults reported that they met the sleep duration recommendation of 7 to 9 hours for those 18 to 64 years old and 7 to 8 hours for those 65 years of age and older. ¹⁻³	B
Stationary time	42% of adults met the stationary time recommendation of 8 hours or less per day. ¹	C-
Recreational screen time	57% of adults reported that they met the recreational screen time recommendation of 3 hours or less per day. ¹	C+



Indicator	Key finding	2025
Capability	75% of adults agreed that they have the physical ability and 85% agreed that they have the psychological ability to be physically active. ³	A-
Opportunity	74% of adults agreed that they have the physical opportunity and 70% agreed they have the social opportunity to be physically active. ³	B
Motivation	80% of adults agreed that they want to be physically active, but only 51% agreed that they sometimes do physical activity without thinking. ³	B-



Indicator	Key finding	2025
Government	68% was the total score based on the following areas: the number and breadth of physical activity-related policies; supporting actions; accountable organization(s); reporting structures; funding; and monitoring and evaluation plans. ¹⁰	B



SPACES, PLACES & CULTURAL NORMS

Indicator	Key finding	2025
Facilities and infrastructure	74% was the average score reported across the areas of supportive environments for active transportation and supporting access to safe and appropriate facilities for physical activity and sport. ⁵⁻⁹	B+
Programming	64% of key settings (e.g., municipalities, workplaces, sport and recreation organizations or public health) support physical activity programming for various populations. ^{5,7}	B-
Policies and leadership	48% was the average score reported across the areas of key settings with a formal strategy or plan for physical activity, sport, recreation or active transportation and that are aware of or use physical activity guidelines and information. ⁵⁻⁷	C
Social environment	45% was the average score reported across the areas of key settings that have enough staff to fulfill physical activity and sport mandates, support volunteers, and have partnerships for facilities or delivering programs. ^{5,7}	C-

ADDITIONAL KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

MODERATE-TO-VIGOROUS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (MVPA)

46%

46% of adults met the recommendation of doing at least 150 minutes of MVPA per week.¹

Additional findings:

- 50% of adults 18 to 64 years old and 30% of adults 65 to 79 years of age met the MVPA recommendation.¹
- 53% of men vs. 39% of women met the MVPA recommendation.¹
- 31% of adults who reported having a disability vs. 48% of adults who did not report having a disability met the MVPA recommendation.¹
- 56% of adults who earned the highest incomes vs. 36% of adults with the lowest incomes met the MVPA recommendation.¹

Recommendations:

- » Physical activity and public health sector organizations can communicate that, while increasing the intensity of physical activity can provide extra benefits, moderate-intensity physical activity is enough to benefit health. In fact, the total amount of physical activity, regardless of its intensity, seems to be important for health.^{11,12}
- » Employers can develop workplace physical activity policies, such as health club use subsidies, paid time off for non-work-related physical activity and on-site facilities to get people moving more at work.¹³
- » City planners can consider adults when designing parks and playgrounds to encourage movement across generations (e.g., playground features scaled for adult use and multi-generational outdoor equipment).^{14,15}
- » Researchers should continue to explore the importance of personalized MVPA goals and how physical activity intensity interacts with time spent being active in reducing the risk of health problems or death.¹²



TOTAL DAILY STEPS

32% of adults took at least 7,500 steps per day, which falls within the physically active lifestyle category.¹

32%

Additional findings:

- 35% of adults 18 to 64 years old and 22% of adults 65 to 79 years of age took at least 7,500 steps per day on average.¹
- 33% of men and 31% of women took at least 7,500 steps a day on average.¹
- 25% of adults who reported having a disability vs. 33% of adults who did not report having a disability took at least 7,500 steps per day.¹
- 24% of adults who immigrated to Canada within the last 10 years vs. 33% of adults who have lived in Canada for longer took at least 7,500 steps a day.¹

Recommendations:

- » Physical activity sector organizations should add step count recommendations to the *Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines* that include both absolute (e.g., 7,500 steps a day) and relative (e.g., an extra 1,000 steps from one's current average daily step count) targets in order to meet people where they are at in terms of their overall activity levels.
- » Primary care providers can encourage inactive and moderately active adults to take 1,000 more steps each day (the equivalent of about 10 minutes of walking) because this increase is linked to a 15% reduced risk of death.¹⁶



MUSCLE-STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES

35% of adults reported meeting the recommendation of engaging in muscle-strengthening activities using major muscle groups at least twice a week.¹⁻³

35%

Additional findings:

- 31% to 39% of adults between the ages of 18 and 64 years, and 24% to 28% of adults 65 years of age and older reported that they met the muscle-strengthening activities recommendation.^{2,3}
- 43% of men vs. 36% of women reported that they met the muscle-strengthening activities recommendation.¹
- 43% of adults with the highest incomes vs. 32% of adults who earned the lowest incomes reported that they met the muscle-strengthening activities recommendation.¹
- 31% of adults living in urban or suburban areas participated in muscle-strengthening activities, compared to 25% of adults living in rural areas.³
- 22% of adults who reported having a disability participated in muscle-strengthening activities, compared to 31% of adults who did not report having a disability.³

Recommendations:

- » Physical activity sector organizations and municipalities can develop policies that make educational resources and certified instructor-led fitness classes focused on promoting safe and effective muscle-strengthening activities more accessible. Not everyone knows how to do these activities, and they must be done correctly for people's safety and to maximize the benefits. This makes home-based programs more challenging.
- » Trainers should continue to tailor resistance training to specific populations and consider a wide range of factors that influence participation (e.g., equipment availability and perceived difficulty).¹⁷



SPORT PARTICIPATION

27% of adults reported that they participated in sport within the past 12 months.⁴

27%

Additional findings:

- 32% of adults 18 to 64 years old and 13% of adults 65 years of age and older participated in sport within the last 12 months.⁴
- 36% of men vs. 19% of women participated in sport within the last 12 months.⁴
- 32% of adults earning higher incomes participated in sport in the past 12 months, compared to 22% of adults earning lower incomes.⁴
- 28% of adults living in urban or suburban areas participated in sport in the past 12 months, compared to 24% of adults living in rural areas.⁴
- 21% of adults who reported having a disability participated in sport in the past 12 months, compared to 30% of adults who did not report having a disability.⁴

Recommendations:

- » Municipalities can offer financial incentives such as vouchers and subsidized access to community-based sport programs for adults, especially those from equity-denied groups.
- » To make sports more appealing and sustainable for busy adults, sport organizations and municipalities should, where possible, provide flexible scheduling, varied formats (e.g., recreational leagues and drop-in play) and opportunities for participants to make friends.



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

46%

46% of adults reported using active transportation (e.g., walked, wheeled, cycled or used public transit) to get to and from places (e.g., work, university/college, parks, malls and friends' homes).¹⁻³

Additional findings:

- 57% of adults who immigrated to Canada within the last 10 years and 39% of adults who have lived in Canada for longer reported that they used active ways to get places within the past seven days.¹
- 38% of adults with the highest incomes and 48% of adults who earned the lowest incomes stated that they used active transportation to get places in the past seven days.¹
- 55% of adults living in urban or suburban areas reported using active transportation to get places in the past seven days, compared to 39% of adults living in rural areas.³
- 47% of adults who reported having a disability reported using active transportation to get places in the past seven days, compared to 53% of adults who did not report having a disability.³

Recommendations:

- » Physical activity sector organizations should continue to share information with adults about the benefits of active transportation and how to incorporate it into their daily routines.^{18,19}
- » Governments should develop policies on environmental planning and incentives like walkability and bike paths instead of regulatory disincentives such as parking fees and vehicle taxes.^{20,21}
- » To support active transportation, municipalities must focus on both infrastructure changes like improving walkability and creating bike paths, as well as behavioural and social programs such as campaigns, bicycle use training and regulation.¹⁸



FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

74%

74% was the average score reported across the areas of supportive environments for active transportation and supporting access to safe and appropriate facilities for physical activity and sport.⁵⁻⁹

Additional findings:

- Most adults reported having access to the following facilities by walking (70% or more) and by cycling (80% or more): grocery stores; workplaces; cultural/arts facilities; health-care facilities; educational facilities and sport/recreational facilities.⁹
- Around 68% of all municipalities in Canada have facilities that are in better than fair condition.⁸

Recommendations:

- » Municipalities should prioritize and continue investing in the design and upkeep of walking trails, bike paths, parks, recreation centres and multi-use sport facilities that are free or low cost to use.
- » Municipalities should endeavour to spread out infrastructure changes equitably across neighbourhoods, especially in underserved and low-income areas, to reduce barriers and support daily physical activity for all adults, regardless of their incomes, abilities or geographic locations (e.g., rural and northern regions).
- » Municipalities should ensure that their facilities and active spaces are welcoming, safe and accessible for all adults.
- » Facility managers and staff should continue to prioritize inclusive design and operations such as offering gender-neutral change rooms, accessible entrances and pathways, adequate lighting, and clear signage. Creating respectful and comfortable atmospheres in active spaces encourages more frequent and confident use by everyone, including older adults, newcomers to Canada and persons with disabilities.



POLICIES AND LEADERSHIP

48%

48% was the average score reported across the areas of key settings with a formal strategy or plan for physical activity, sport, recreation or active transportation and that are aware of or use physical activity guidelines and information.⁵⁻⁷

Additional findings:

- 42% of communities with at least 1,000 residents have a formal plan for parks and recreation.⁵
- 22% of communities with at least 1,000 residents have a formal strategy for physical activity and sport opportunities for their citizens.⁵
- 17% of communities with at least 1,000 residents have a formal plan for active transportation.⁵

Recommendations:

- » To advocate for sustainable facilities and opportunities, physical activity sector organizations must use evidence-based strategies and research to demonstrate the impact of sport, physical activity and recreation on organizations and all levels of government.
- » Researchers should continue to study the effectiveness of population-wide interventions that target environmental and policy changes on adults physical activity behaviours. Most evidence comes from small-scale or individual-focused interventions. Research is needed to evaluate how large-scale changes, such as new infrastructure, policy shifts or community-wide campaigns, impact physical activity levels across diverse adult populations over time.
- » Provincial, territorial and municipal governments should continue to put into effect policies that impact multiple sectors and include physical activity promotion across transportation, urban planning, workplaces and health care.¹³ Coordinated policies like creating more walkable cities and towns, encouraging active commuting, including physical activity counseling in health care, and supporting workplace wellness can create supportive environments and opportunities that make being active the easy choice for adults.²²



GOVERNMENT

68%

68% was the total score based on the following areas: the number and breadth of physical activity-related policies; supporting actions; accountable organization(s); reporting structures; funding; and monitoring and evaluation plans.¹⁰

Additional findings:

- Based on a 2024 cross-country policy audit, each provincial and territorial government had between two and eight (four on average) physical activity-related policies and the federal government had 13.^{10,23} Of these policies:
 - 76% identified organizations that are accountable for applying the policies;
 - 70% identified reporting systems;
 - 70% identified clear references to funding;
 - 53% identified systems for monitoring and evaluating the progress and impact of the policies.
- While most provincial and territorial governments helped create and are part of [*A Common Vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living in Canada: Let's Get Moving*](#), four of them have added their own sport-specific strategies, and five of them have included sport, physical activity and/or recreation strategies.
- Since 2024, 12 provincial and territorial governments have introduced new physical activity-related strategies and investments, including the following:
 - 11 policies/strategies;
 - 23 funding programs;
 - 19 infrastructure investments;
 - 4 research investments;
 - 5 resources/programs;
 - 3 tax measures;
 - 3 legislations.

Recommendations:

- » The Government of Canada should:
 - » Create national measurable adult physical activity targets such as increasing physical activity rates by a relative 15% by 2030;
 - » Provide provincial and territorial physical activity and sedentary behaviour statistics at least every two years;
 - » Coordinate between national sport-, physical activity- and recreation-related strategies (e.g., [*A Common Vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living in Canada: Let's Get Moving*](#), [*Canadian Sport Policy Framework for Recreation in Canada*](#)) and Canada's [*Federal Implementation Plan*](#) for addressing the [*United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals*](#).²⁴



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METHODOLOGY, FULL REPORT & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Our interdisciplinary research team identified and assessed the 2025 ParticipACTION Adult Report Card indicators to determine grade assignments based on the best available data, research and key issue areas. All of this is included in the full version. Where possible, our team also considered trends over time and differences related to equity-denied groups. At the time of Report Card release, the analysis techniques for some equity-denied groups were still under development for the 2022-2024 CHMS. ParticipACTION will continue to work with Statistics Canada to ensure these data are sourced.

The full version of the 2025 [Report Card](#) includes background information on our methodology and process, in-depth analyses, summaries of all key research, and additional indicators (e.g., stationary time, recreational screen time and sleep), charts, figures and complete references.

Visit ParticipACTION.com/The-Science/Adult-Report-Card to download the full version of the 2025 Report Card and other tools and resources.

Aussi disponible en français :
ParticipACTION.com/Fr/La-Science/Bulletin-des-adultes.



Our strategic partner, the [Sedentary Living Lab at the University of Alberta](#), played a critical role in the research and development of the 2025 ParticipACTION Adult Report Card.



Canadian Fitness
and Lifestyle
Research Institute

We also thank our strategic data partner, the [Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute \(CFLRI\)](#), for their contributions to the 2025 ParticipACTION Adult Report Card.

Production of the 2025 Adult Report Card was made possible thanks to financial support from the following partners:



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada

SSHRC  CRSH

Please use the following citation:

ParticipACTION. Moving Beyond Stagnation: Elevating Physical Activity in Canada:
The 2025 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults. Toronto: ParticipACTION; 2025.

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