

# THE PRICE OF INACTIVITY

## Measuring the Powerful Impact of Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation

Advocates in the field of sport, physical activity and recreation (SPAR) have long claimed that being active is crucial not only for health and wellbeing, but also provides important societal, environmental and economic impacts. Many of these are quantifiable and can illustrate the impact for our communities and our country. A new cutting-edge study by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI) and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) uses trusted data sources to measure the economic, social, health and

The total impacts generated by sport, physical activity and recreation on our society are significant and extensive.

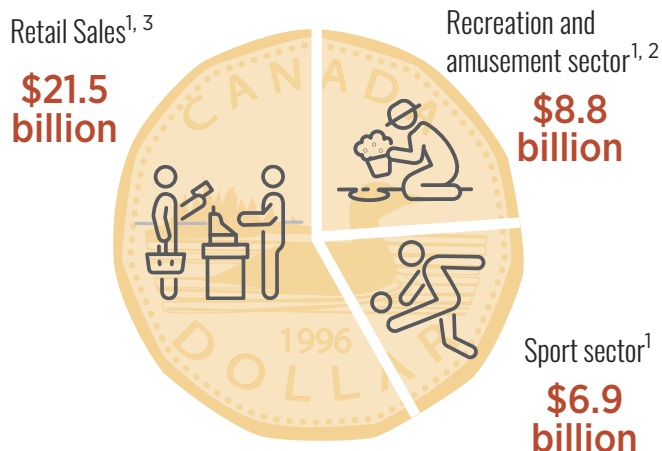
environmental impacts of sport, physical activity, and recreation.

The numbers prove that investing in sport, physical activity, and recreation can pay substantial dividends and can help combat some of today's most complex problems.

### BREAKING DOWN THE VALUES

Given these numbers assess different constructs or concepts, these amounts cannot be added together.

#### Economic Impact (2022) **\$37.2 billion**



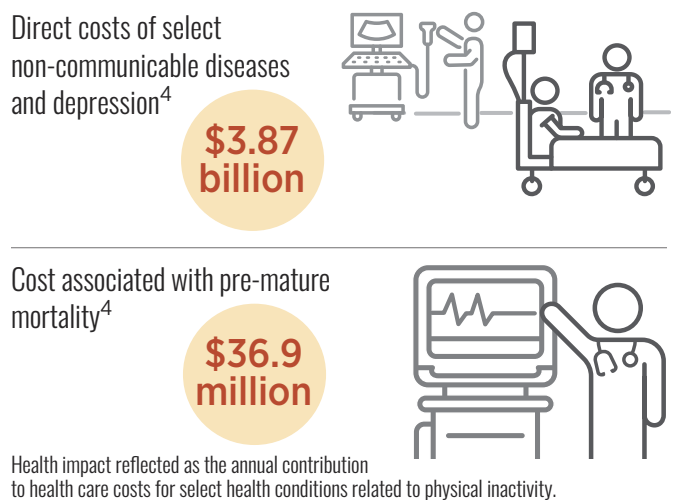
Economic impact reflected as the annual contribution to Canada's economy from SPAR and retail sales.

#### Social Impact (2020) **\$13.6 billion**



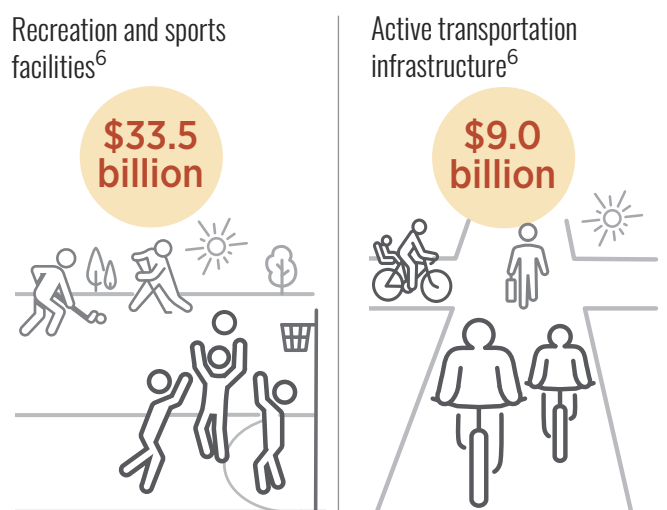
Social impact reflected as the value of volunteering for SPAR-based activities.

#### Health Impact (2022) **\$3.9 billion**



Health impact reflected as the annual contribution to health care costs for select health conditions related to physical inactivity.

#### Environmental Impact (2020) **\$42.5 billion**



Environmental impact reflected as the replacement value of SPAR facilities and active transportation infrastructure.

<sup>1</sup> Value as it relates to the gross domestic product.

<sup>2</sup> Recreation and amusement sector comprised of golf and country clubs, skiing facilities, fitness and recreational sports, and all other amusement and recreation facilities.

<sup>3</sup> Retail sales comprised of athletic footwear, sporting equipment and recreation vehicles.

<sup>4</sup> Based on non-communicable diseases which include coronary heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, breast cancer, colon cancer, hypertension, osteoporosis, depression.

<sup>5</sup> Calculated using percentage of volunteers in sport, physical activity and recreation and hours spent.

<sup>6</sup> Based on estimated replacement value of sport and recreation facilities, and active transportation infrastructure in 'very poor', 'poor' or 'fair' condition.



## TAKING ACTION

The following chart provides a sample of actions that governments and non-governmental organizations can enact to foster the benefits of sport, physical activity and recreation (SPAR).

### ACTIONS 1-6

**1 Develop and implement** evidence-based policies and action plans to increase participation in SPAR, created through multi-jurisdictional and multi-sector partnerships. Ensure evaluation is a key component of all actions.

**2 Secure** funding and resources from various sectors to ensure the most efficient and effective use of funding, including governmental and non-governmental sources to support SPAR.

**3 Secure** long-term, dedicated funding from various sources to build, retrofit, or maintain aging SPAR infrastructure. Ensure all infrastructure projects consider energy efficiency, greenness and sustainability.

**4 Ensure** quality and credible research and surveillance across sectors to monitor the economic contribution of SPAR.

**5 Support** SPAR volunteers by ensuring an inclusive and welcoming environment; being flexible; promoting volunteering over the life-course; recognizing and incentivizing volunteering; providing training, information and a mechanism for feedback.

**6 Develop and implement** comprehensive communications strategies for SPAR that: provide input from inactive individuals to understand relevant perceptions, attitudes, and barriers; aim to shift cultural norms and acceptance towards being active; are tailored for specific populations; highlight the multiple benefits associated with increased participation; reflect both changing individual behaviours and community-based and system-based components.

**7 Offer** SPAR programs that include social time, such as partner- or family-based activities, walking clubs. Work with neighbourhoods to lead or support placemaking initiatives to nurture social connections and community well-being.

**8 Encourage** schools, with support from the broader community, to take a comprehensive approach to SPAR, including: offering quality, daily physical education classes;

providing accessible physical environments and resources for structured and unstructured activities throughout the day; providing opportunities for, and encouraging, active travel to school; and, establishing supportive school policies by engaging staff, students, parents and community organizations.

**9 Foster** a culture of health and SPAR for employees in all types of workplaces, by promoting and supporting: opportunities for incidental physical activity throughout the day; active commuting; physically active social activities; an active working culture such as walking meetings; educational events; and, workplace policies including flexible time.

**10 Enhance** safe and equitable access to quality public and green spaces, including recreational facilities, trails, parks, and sports amenities by *all* people, of *all* ages and diverse backgrounds and abilities, in urban, rural and remote communities. Assess the environmental impact of urbanization on greenness, tree canopy, heat islands, and availability of green and blue spaces, and parks. Ensure access to natural environments and educate on the conservation, ecology, and renewal of the land.

**11 Prioritize and dedicate** funding for *safe, accessible, and affordable* active transportation (or in combination with public transport) and educate on the environmental benefits to individuals and society as a whole (e.g., mitigating climate change, improving personal health). Develop and implement policies to increase road safety, including modified infrastructure and roadway laws to increase safety measures.

**12 Incentivize** an increased focus of health care providers on non-communicable disease prevention and management including: appropriate funding to support prevention or counselling related to SPAR; incorporating regular assessments, advice, and physical activity prescriptions into visits; building relationships between health care providers and the SPAR sector that provide a seamless referral from health care providers into the SPAR system; providing increased opportunities for in-service or pre-service training to increasing competencies in physical activity counselling in health care settings.

#### References:

1. International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) (2020). ISPAH's Eight Investments that Work for Physical Activity; 2. World Health Organization. (2018). Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018–2030: More Active People for a Healthier World; 3. ISPAH. (2022). Ten Ways to Prioritise Physical Activity Actions; 4. Volunteer Canada. (ND). Available at: <https://volunteer.ca/index.php?MenuItemID=345>; 5. Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (2023). A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 Pathways to Wellbeing, Update 2023: Reflecting the Current Context; 6. ISPAH. (2016). The Bangkok Declaration on Physical Activity for Global Health and Sustainable Development.

*The Price of Inactivity: Measuring the Powerful Impact of Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada* research and report, and the production of this infographic were made possible through a financial contribution from Parks Canada, the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council (SPARC), and the Canadian Training Network for Parks and Recreation (CTNPR). Thanks also to Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton for assistance with the project. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of these agencies.



Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute  
230-2733 Lancaster Rd.  
Ottawa, ON K1B 0A9  
[www.cflri.ca](http://www.cflri.ca)



Canadian Parks and Recreation Association  
1180 Walkley Road, PO Box 83069  
Ottawa, ON, K1V 2M5  
[www.cpra.ca](http://www.cpra.ca)