

ADVANCING THE UNITED NATIONS' SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

An Opportunity for Canada to Lead the Way

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) adopted 17 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, including ending poverty, addressing climate change, and ensuring equitable opportunities for health and prosperity. In response, Canada has identified an agenda of 30 federal actions, 60 indicators, and various targets to achieve these goals by 2030 – many of which can be interconnected.

Increasing population-level physical activity offers broad physical, social, economic, environmental, and mental health benefits. **By leveraging existing sport, physical activity, and recreation (SPAR) strategies** to effectively support both international and domestic SDGs, Canada can bypass waiting for the future envisioned and instead, lead the way in creating positive change, now.



CANADA'S CURRENT STRATEGIES

Canada has four national strategies that support and advocate for SPAR:

1. *Canadian Sport Policy*
2. *A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: Let's Get Moving*
3. *A Framework for Recreation in Canada: Pathways to Wellbeing*
4. *National Active Transportation Strategy*

However, these strategies do **not** provide explicit connection between the SDGs and SPAR. By identifying common indicators across these strategies and proactively integrating SDG indicators into Canadian SPAR strategies, Canada can achieve synergies and efficiencies across these plans and facilitate cost-effective, meaningful action.

LINKING SDG INDICATORS TO CANADIAN SPAR STRATEGIES

Any future revisions or updates to the Canadian SPAR strategies should incorporate explicit links to the SDGs and highlight specific measurable targets and indicators. Figure 1 highlights examples of where connections can be made between the SDGs and the SPAR strategies:

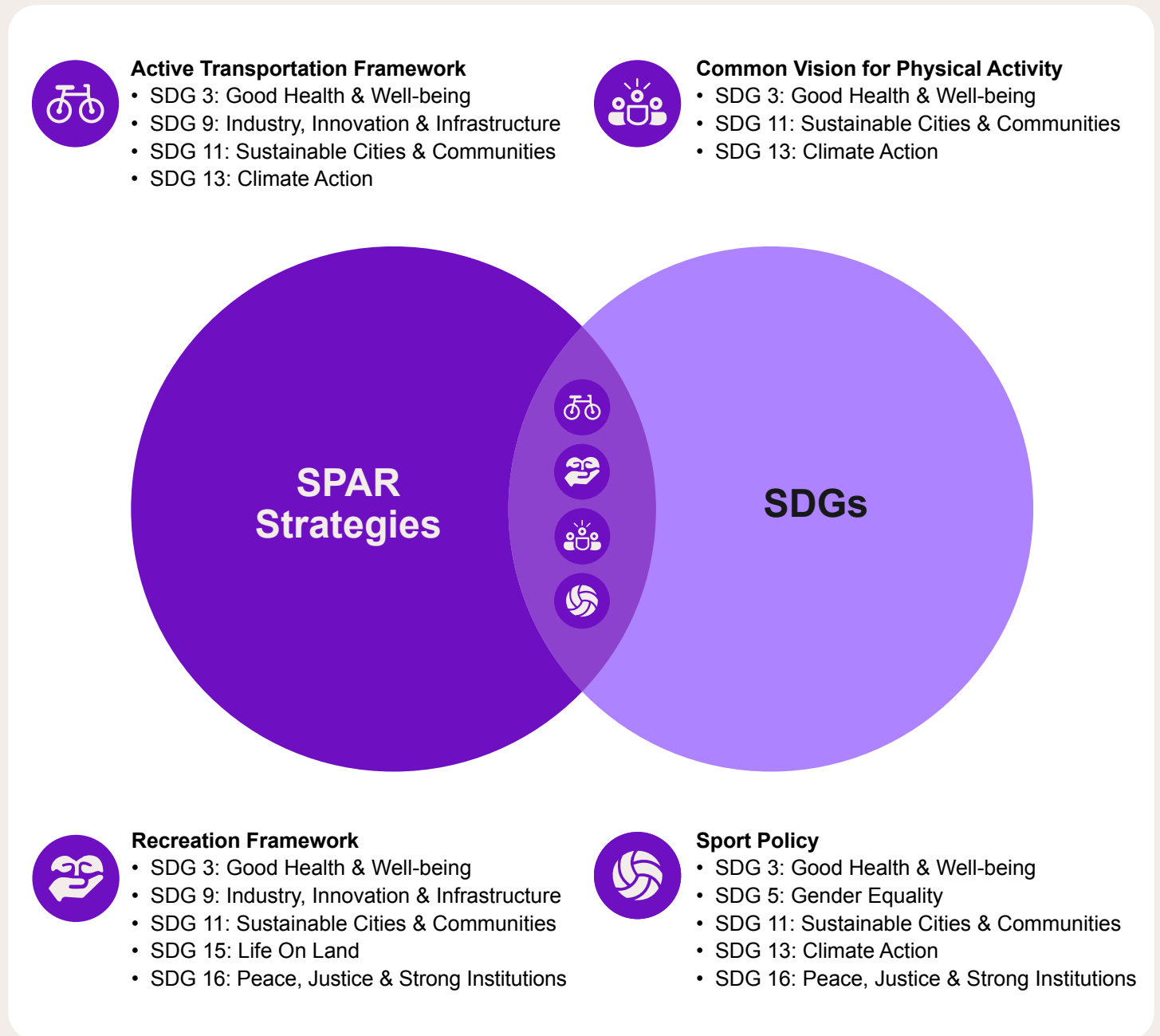


Figure 1. Canadian SPAR strategies and potential overlap with relevant SDGs.

TAKING ACTION TOWARDS A MORE ACTIVE AND HEALTHIER CANADA

Recommendations

1

The Government of Canada should continue to invest in increasing physical activity levels and reducing barriers to getting active in Canada.

Adequate funding, leadership, monitoring and evaluation, and collective and cooperative action between government, organizations, and influencers are needed to be able to leverage sport, physical activity, and recreation strategies as a tool in achieving the SDGs.

2

SPAR organizations and influencers should ensure that links to the SDGs are described in the next revisions to the Sport Policy and the Recreation Framework.

For instance, building inclusive public spaces, ensuring safety in recreational areas, and fostering community-driven physical activity initiatives would be consistent with SDG 16 and of direct interest to the Recreation Framework.

3

Existing sport policies and initiatives, such as Sport for Life (SDG 3) and the Canada Games Council's Sustainability Initiatives (SDG 13), exemplify the successful integration of the SDGs.

To build on these efforts, federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal organizations must prioritize and actively embed the SDGs into their policies and initiatives. This integration should involve clear policy-specific benchmarks, cross-sector collaboration, and targeted funding to ensure measurable progress.

4

SPAR-specific measurable targets and indicators should be developed by the Government of Canada for the Canadian indicator framework for the SDGs and be regularly monitored by independent organizations and the government.

For instance, the target for physical activity under Goal 3 lacks a stated threshold (e.g., by 2030, X% of people in Canada will be physically active according to guidelines).

5

SPAR-specific measurable targets and indicators should be developed for the global indicator framework by the UN with input from the Government of Canada.



Undertaking Canada's federal actions while meeting numerous indicators and targets to achieve the SDGs by 2030 will require commitment to and the swift identification and implementation of efforts beyond government.

Improving physical activity levels can be an efficient and effective way to improve the health and well-being of Canadians, and Canada has an opportunity to lead the way by making sport, physical activity, and recreation a priority and work more strategically towards achieving the UN's SDGs.

The relevance of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals in the promotion of sport, physical activity, and recreation in Canada, a report released by ParticipACTION, in collaboration with members of its Research Advisory Group and the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, explores the connections between SPAR strategies and the SDGs. Read the full [commentary](#) for additional findings and recommendations.