

Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty: Year 2 Report and Catalogue

RESEARCH
REPORT

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JUSTICE** _____

Towards Evidence-Based
Transportation Equity Policy

About Mobilizing Justice

The Mobilizing Justice Partnership is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Based at the University of Toronto Scarborough, the national intersectoral research partnership aims to understand and address transportation poverty in Canada and to improve the well-being of Canadians at risk of transport poverty. Learn more at www.mobilizingjustice.ca.

Our Partners

Amalgamated Transit Union Canada	Federation of Canadian Municipalities	Toronto Transit Committee (TTC)
Autorité régionale de transport métropolitain (ARTM)	Infrastructure Canada	Transit App
Canadian Institute of Planners	McGill University	Translink
Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)	McMaster University	United Way of the GTA
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Centre for Active Transportation	Pantonium	University of Oregon
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CIRRELT (Université de Montréal)	Region of Waterloo	University of Toronto
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ESRI Canada	Statistics Canada	York Region



Author Contribution

This report was produced in spring 2022 by Kara Martin, a graduate student intern jointly supervised by Dr. Meghan Winters, Professor, Simon Fraser University and Nancy Smith Lea, Senior Advisor, The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT) at Clean Air Partnership. Kate Hosford, PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University, and David Simor, TCAT Director, also provided input and guidance.

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Introduction

The *Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty Catalogue* is a project in partnership between the Mobilizing Justice Theme 2 Transportation Modes team and The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT). The catalogue collates community initiatives across Canada that support transport equity by increasing transportation options, especially for people who may be experiencing transport poverty. Transport poverty occurs when inequitable transportation infrastructure and systems impede access to employment, services, educational opportunities, food, open space and leisure, and other destinations. People all across Canada are experiencing this - some estimates suggest up to 1.3 million Canadians live in transport poverty (Allen & Farber, 2019).

In 2021, under the supervision of Mobilizing Justice Theme 2 Co-Leads, Dr. Meghan Winters and Nancy Smith Lea, graduate student intern Sabat Ismail created the original version of the *Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty catalogue* and accompanying *report*. This first version contained 13 variables (columns) describing various characteristics (e.g. location, host organization, population focus, mode of transportation, etc.) of 245 community-led transport equity initiatives (rows). Then, in the spring of 2022, through a second graduate student internship supervised by Dr. Winters, Nancy Smith Lea, and David Simor, TCAT Director, the catalogue was updated with expanded entries in regions that were previously underrepresented and descriptions were completed for all the initiatives. The latest version also directs more attention to specific equity-deserving groups and how their needs are, or are not, being met.

The catalogue provides a snapshot of existing work and remaining deficits in infrastructure, as well as policy and service gaps. We envision that the catalogue will be useful for advocates and practitioners to better understand the transportation barriers and adaptive practices being undertaken across Canada and to ultimately inform the development of evidence-based policy recommendations to advance transport equity. This report describes the process by which the catalogue was developed and provides an analysis of general trends and gaps in transportation options for those experiencing transport poverty.

Methodology

In the updated version of the catalogue (Version 2.0) completed in July 2022, there are now 16 variables and 266 initiatives. While every effort was made to capture as many initiatives as possible, some were likely missed. Similar to the work of the previous intern, community initiatives were located through Google searches, Facebook scans, news articles, and personal networks. One variable was dropped (population focus), three new variables and 15 sub-variables (11 equity-deserving and four built environment) were created, and brief summaries were written for each of the 239 initiatives that did not already have one (27 were completed in the initial catalogue). More information about the new features are as follows:

1. **New variables:**

- a. **Equity-Deserving Focus:** This variable identifies projects focused on providing services to equity-deserving groups. This was determined by information provided by the organization on their website or social media. If the initiative explicitly states they are focused on equity-

deserving groups, then this variable is marked as Yes (Y). Eleven equity deserving groups were identified, based on the ten groups identified in the work of Linovski et al., (2021) and expanded in consultation with the Mobilizing Justice team. The groups are Children and Youth, Housing Insecure (includes Unsheltered), Incarcerated (Friends and Families of), Indigenous, Low income, Newcomers (includes Foreign Workers), People with Disabilities (Visible and Invisible), Racialized, Seniors, Women and Girls, and 2SLGBTQ+.

- b. **Equity-Deserving Led:** This variable indicates if an initiative is led by a person/people from equity-deserving groups. This was determined by information provided by the organization on their website or social media. If the organization explicitly states they are equity-deserving led, then this variable is marked as Yes (Y).
 - c. **Built Environment:** This variable describes the type of built environment the initiative is situated in. The four options are urban, suburban, exurban, and rural. Entries are sometimes listed as a combination of built environment types.
2. **Descriptions:** Initiative descriptions were added for each of the 239 entries that did not already have one. Descriptions include an overview of the initiative (and host organization if any), who is leading it, the date it was launched, its vision/mission, and what it does. Information was gathered from websites, Facebook pages/groups, or Twitter accounts associated with the initiative.
 3. **Additional entries:** 21 initiatives were added in the updated version for a new total of 266. Many of the new entries are located in the Atlantic region and British Columbia, previously underrepresented regions.

Results

Identifying and categorizing Canadian community initiatives establishes a base understanding of the work that has been done to address transportation inequities in this country. Furthermore, analyzing trends in the catalogue exposes the existing gaps and whose needs are not being adequately addressed as a result. The following analysis highlights seven summary findings, looking at the distribution of programs by: 1) **region** (location), 2) **transportation mode**, 3) **built environment**, 4) **combined transportation mode & region**, 5) **equity-deserving group focus**, 6) **equity-deserving led**, and 7) **combined transportation mode & equity-deserving group focus**.

1. **By Region:** Of the 266 initiatives (see *Figure 1*), the greatest percentage are in Ontario (36%, 97), followed by Québec (18%, 47), the Prairies (17%, 45), British Columbia (14%, 38), the Atlantic region (11%, 28), national initiatives (4%, 10), and finally <1% (only 1) in the Northern region. To some degree, these percentages reflect the relative proportion of the Canadian population that lives in each region. For example, 39% of the Canadian population lives in Ontario (36% of initiatives), while 22% of the population lives in Québec (18% of initiatives), 18% of the population lives in the Prairies (17% of initiatives), 14% lives in British Columbia (14% of initiatives), and Northern residents make

up 0.3% of Canada’s population and correlate to 0.4% of the community initiatives listed in the catalogue. However, where the number of initiatives does not correspond to the relative population is in the Atlantic provinces. While 11% of the initiatives take place in the Atlantic, only 6.5% of the population lives in this region (StatCan, 2022); so per capita, the Atlantic region has more community initiatives working to address transportation poverty than any other Canadian region. To note, the relative population may not be representative of the proportion of equity-deserving individuals in a region; some regions may experience more transportation poverty than others, and may have more need for initiatives supporting these groups. There were also initiatives that aimed to support people across the nation, for example Canada Walks (a national project of Green Communities Canada that promotes the value of walking and walkability) or Vélo Canada Bikes (a national cycling advocacy organization).

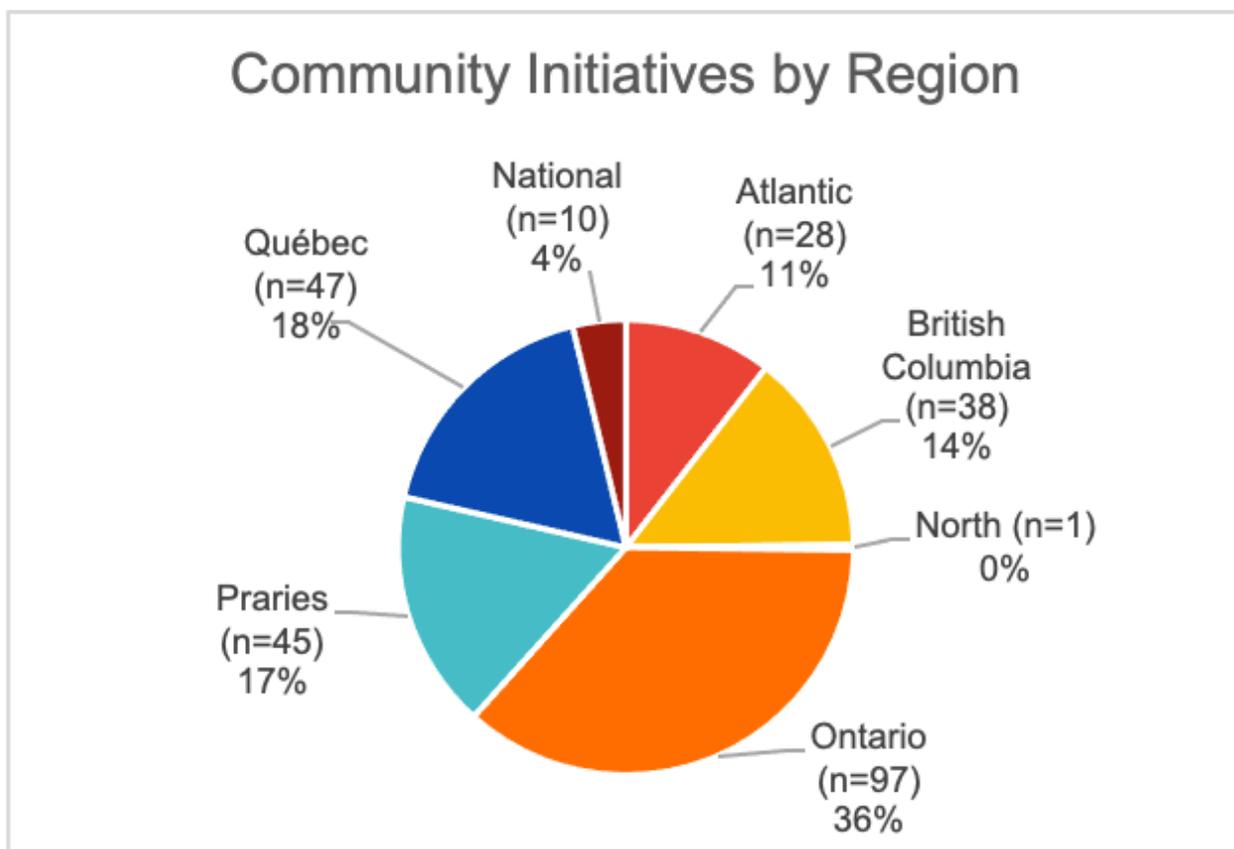


Figure 1: Community Initiatives by Region

- By Mode of Transportation:** According to the 2016 Canadian Census data, 74% of the population get to work by driving an automobile, 12% on public transit, 7% by walking or riding a bicycle, 6% car/rideshare, and 1% by other modes (StatCan, 2016). This data only captures the main mode of transportation to work and does not represent multi-modal trips or non-work-related trips, thus, only captures typical commuting patterns to formalized jobs. There are many challenges to accessing transportation that extend beyond commuting to a workplace or school. A look at the catalogue

shows that many grassroots initiatives are tackling access to transport options beyond the private automobile. As seen in *Figure 2*, the primary focus is on improving travel options, especially for active transportation: 42% (113) of the community initiatives are focused on access to cycling, 22% (59) for public transportation, 14% (37) for active transportation (both walking and cycling), 11% (29) for sustainable transportation (both active and public transportation), 7% (18) for car/rideshare, and 4% (10) for walking. Such a preponderance of initiatives focused on active transportation (over 56% for cycling and active transportation combined) indicates a very high interest in, and need for, improving conditions for active transportation, but may not necessarily meet the needs of many populations experiencing transportation poverty. People who have mobility limitations or live in areas without access to safe bike lanes and sidewalks may continue to experience transport poverty despite local initiatives.

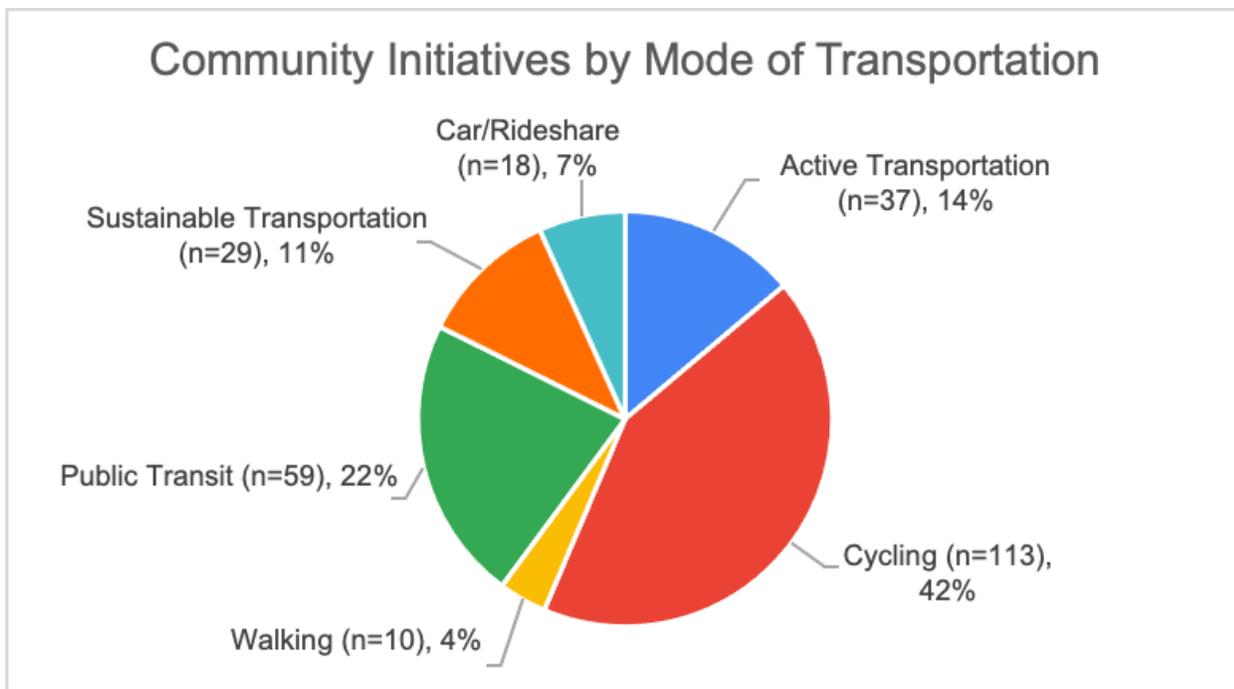


Figure 2: Community Initiatives by Mode of Transportation

- By Built Environment:** Transportation supports vary across community types. As seen in *Figure 3*, 50% (134) of the initiatives are found in urban environments. Only 8% (21) are in suburban areas and 8% (21) are in rural places, for a total of 16% (42) situated in non-urban environments. A third of the interventions (34%, 90) cross-cut built environment contexts (i.e. Urban/Rural, Urban/Suburban, Urban/Suburban/Exurban, and All). These initiatives tended to assist people traveling between different types of communities, for example, someone moving from an exurban environment to an urban environment. As Canadian suburban and exurban communities continue to grow rapidly (StatCan, 2022b), more efforts are needed to assist movement between different types of built environment, especially for those living in transport poverty.

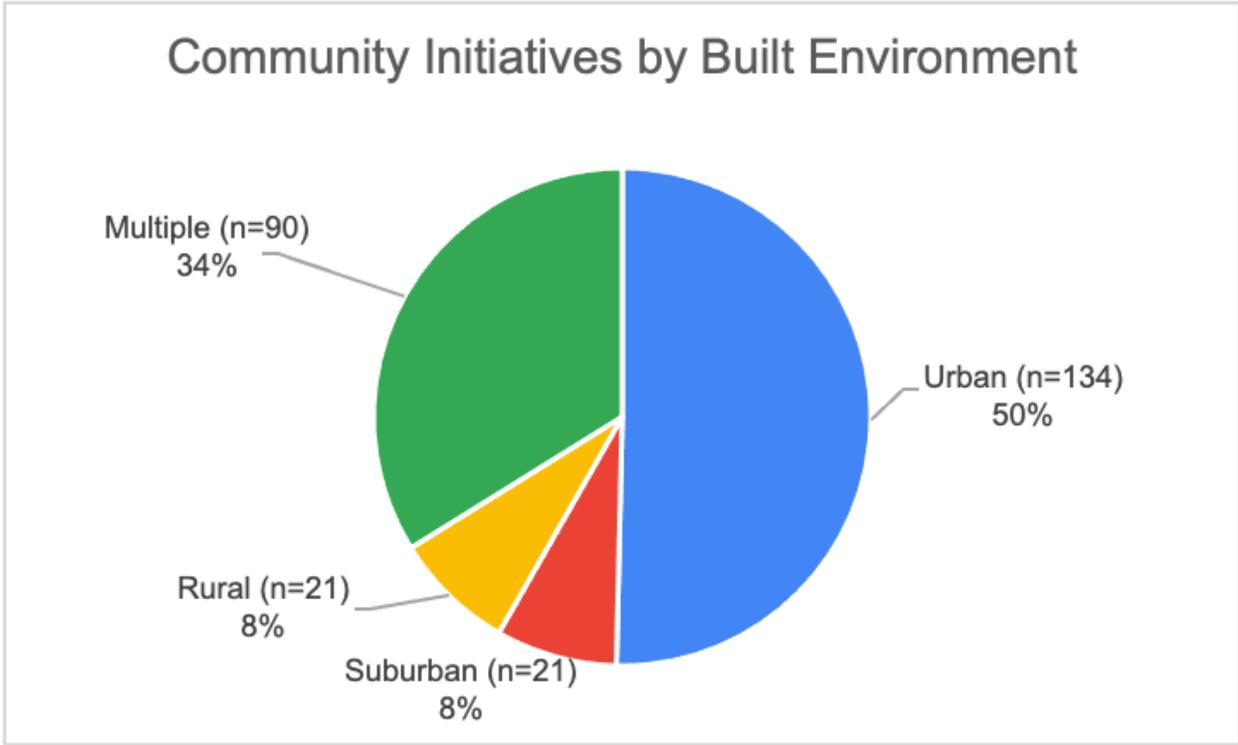


Figure 3: Community Initiatives by Built Environment

4. **By Region & Mode of Transportation:** We also looked at how the transportation mode focus differed by region. As displayed in *Figure 4*, cycling is the common focus across all regions, with the exception of national projects and the Northern region. There was a relatively large representation of projects that focused on public transit in the Atlantic provinces, British Columbia, Ontario, the Prairies, and Québec, despite differing population size and urbanization rates. Nearly half of Ontario’s initiatives were focused on public transportation, possibly because Canada’s five fastest growing census metropolitan areas (CMAs) are located within the province (StatCan, 2022b), and thus each may have local public transit initiatives. Another interesting note is that the highest rate of car/rideshare initiatives are in the Prairies, significantly higher than any other region in the country, and suggests differing transportation conditions than other Canadian regions. Further exploration is needed to investigate the impact of private versus public transportation options for those experiencing transportation poverty.

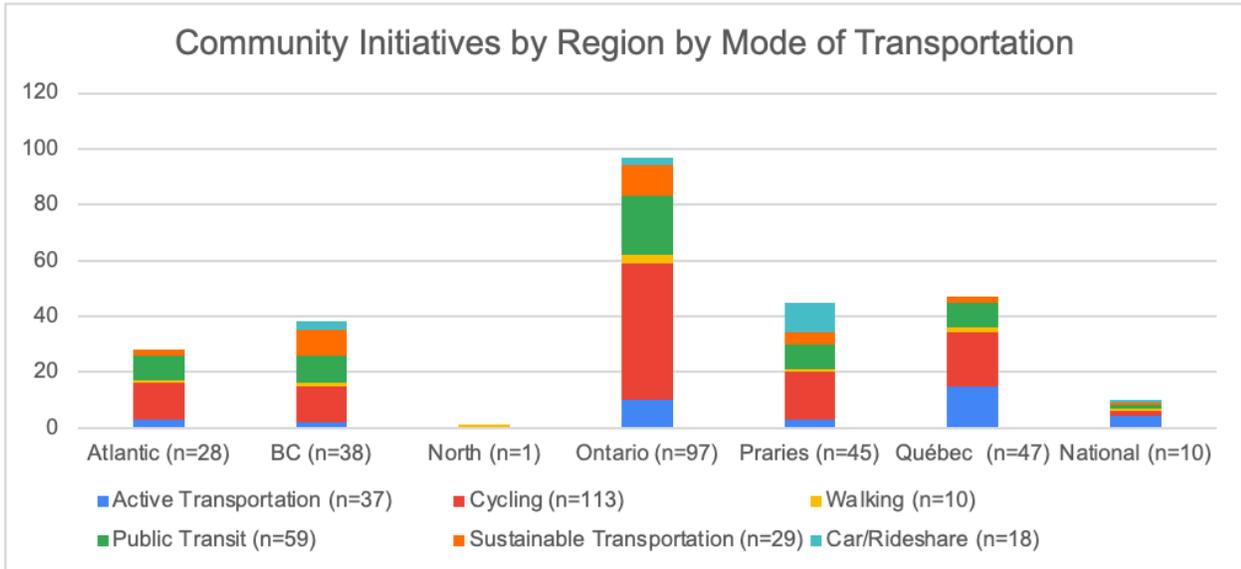


Figure 4: Community Initiatives by Region & Mode of Transportation

- By Equity-Deserving Group Focus:** Of the 266 initiatives, 42% (111) explicitly state that they provide services to one or more equity-deserving groups, for a total of 155 different equity-deserving groups being served. Close to half (46%, 72) of these are geared toward people with low-income, possibly due to the intersectional nature of poverty. The rest of the community initiatives that provide services to equity-seeking groups focus on people with disabilities at (13%, 20), racialized and indigenous people (12%, 18), children and youth (8%, 13), seniors (8%, 12), and newcomers (6%, 10) (see Figure 5). Classification of equity-deserving groups or individuals was based on self-identified information available on the initiative’s website or social media sites. Due to the limitations of available data (i.e. if equity-deserving self-identification was not provided), we cannot guarantee that all the information is completely accurate.

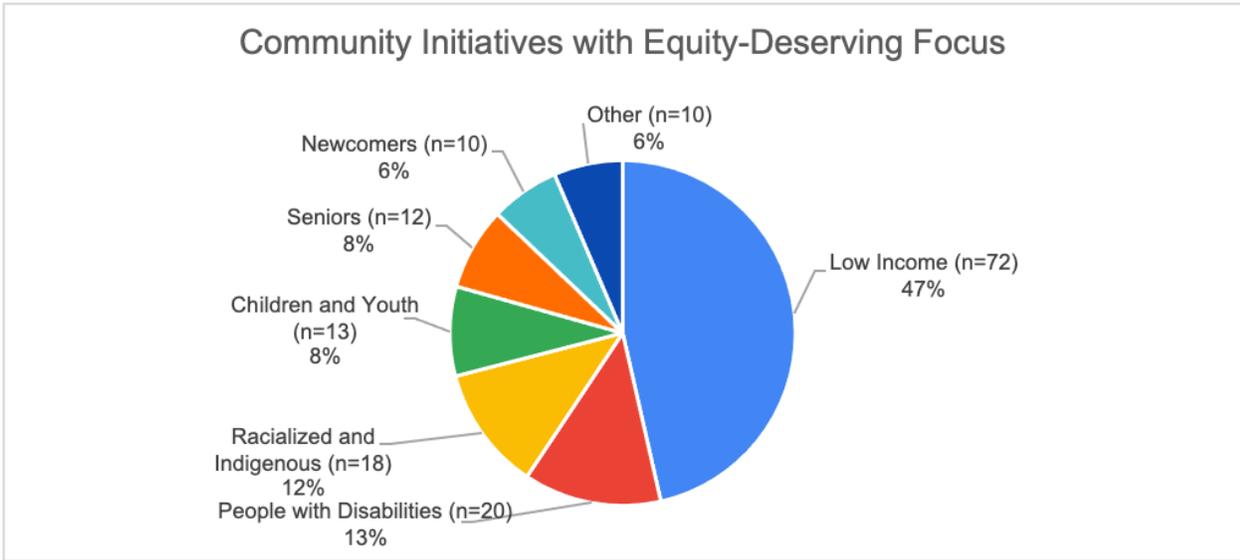


Figure 5: Community Initiatives with Equity-Deserving Focus by Category

6. **Equity-Deserving Led:** This new variable identifies which community initiatives self-identify as being led by an equity-deserving individual or group. Results in *Figure 6* are organized according to the ***equity-deserving group served by the initiative***, and not by the identity of the individual(s) leading the project. Indigenous people are the focus population for 23% (8) of the equity-deserving led initiatives; followed by racialized and low-income people, each with 14% (5); and women and girls, people with disabilities, and children and youth with 11% (4) each.

The categories of incarcerated (family members), indigenous, low-income, people with disabilities, racialized, and women, are often members from the respective group starting a project to help their peers. Almost all the initiatives began as grassroots projects in an effort to help their own community. For example, Ikwe Safe Rides, Anguit’s Safe Ride in the City, and Safe and Sober Rides Regina were started by Indigenous women using their own personal vehicles to help other Indigenous women and girls get around safely. These projects have since expanded to include other volunteer drivers and serve other vulnerable populations. Another example is the Stop Gap foundation, which was founded by an individual who uses a wheelchair. Through his lived experience, he noticed that accessibility was a significant challenge for people with disabilities in everyday life. The catalogue entries suggest that equity-deserving led projects are often started by people who understand transportation poverty from their own lived experience and want to help others facing similar circumstances.

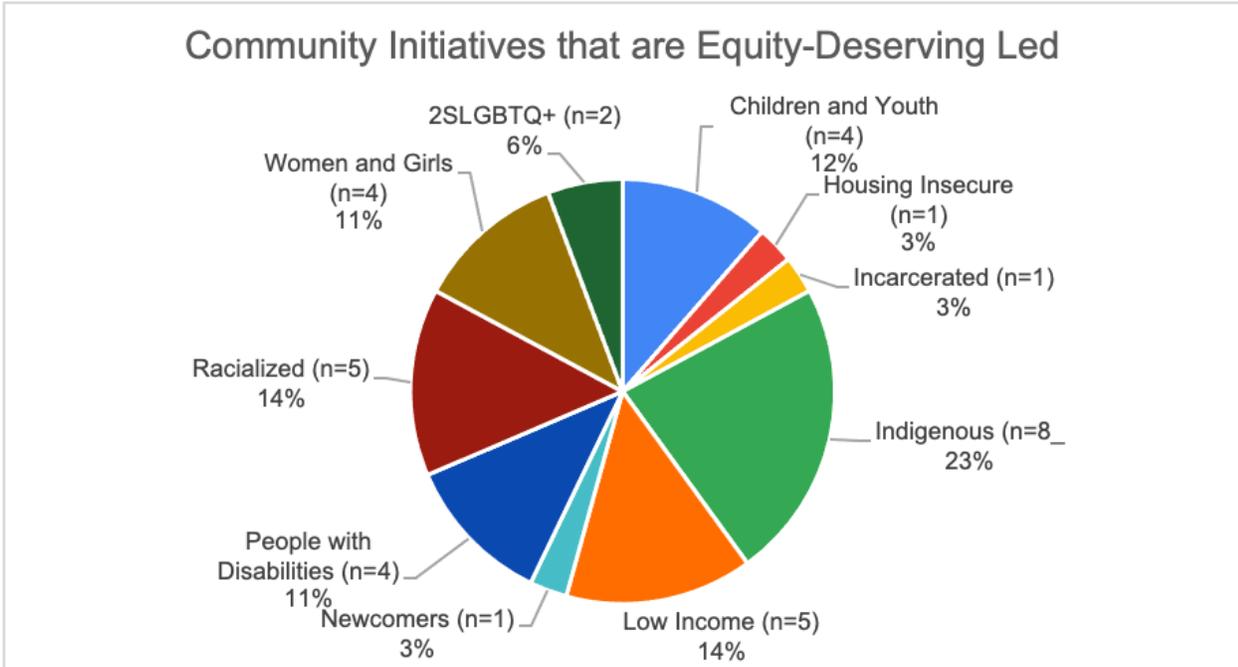


Figure 6: Community Initiatives that are Equity-Deserving Led by Category

7. **Equity-Deserving Group Focus & Mode of Transportation:** We also examined which transport modes are being offered as a solution to transportation poverty for different equity-deserving groups. For this analysis we merged the mode of transportation into three groups: 1) active transportation (including walking, cycling, and initiatives focused on both), 2) public transit, and 3) other (sustainable transportation and carshare/rideshare). As seen below in *Figure 7*, many initiatives focused on active transportation target people with low-income, children and youth, housing insecure people, newcomers, and racialized people. Public transportation is the most abundant transportation option provided for people with disabilities, and a close second option for 2SLGBTQ+, seniors, and low-income individuals. 'Other' transportation options, like car/rideshare, are the most common mode for people with incarcerated loved ones, women and girls, Indigenous people, and senior focused initiatives.

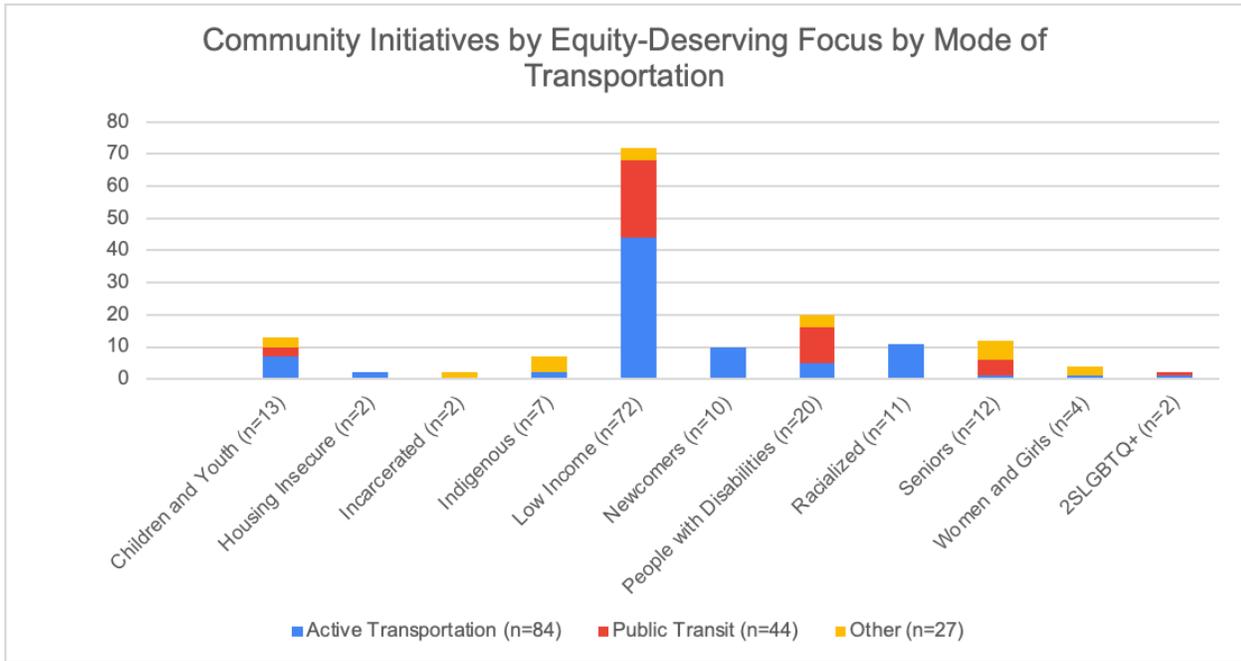


Figure 7: Community Initiatives by Equity-Deserving Focus by Mode of Transportation

Conclusions

The *Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty Catalogue* summarizes initiatives across Canada that are working towards transportation equity. The updated version of the catalogue has expanded the catalogue entries and variables, specifically to direct more attention to equity-deserving groups and how their needs are or are not being met. Analysis of the 266 initiatives reveals the following key takeaways:

- 1. Focus on Cycling Initiatives:** Over half (56%) of the initiatives focus on cycling. Some examples include initiatives that are providing people with access to low-cost bicycles or advocating for safe cycling facilities. At first glance, it may seem like cycling is overrepresented, but these efforts are greatly needed and often in greater demand than what is available. With the federal announcement of [Canada's National Active Transportation Strategy and Fund](#) in 2021, hopefully these kinds of projects will continue to increase and meet demand. More importantly, the growing demand for cycling demonstrates the urgent need for other transportation options to alleviate transport poverty. This need is especially true for anyone who may have mobility limitations or lives in an area without access to safe cycling infrastructure.
- 2. Focus on Urban Environments:** Half of the initiatives are found in urban environments, and 34% are dedicated to those traveling between different built environment types (i.e. from urban to rural places). The representation of urban environments is important because, in 2021, 74% of Canada's population lived in one of the 41 large urban centres (cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants). From 2016 to 2021, populations in downtown centres grew the most rapidly at an average of 11%. However, urban sprawl is also continuing to increase, especially in the furthest suburbs (exurbs),

communities that are at least a 30-minute drive from downtown in non-rush hour traffic. These exurbs grew by 9%, on average, and faster than closer suburban communities (StatCan, 2022). This growth of distant urban sprawl highlights the need for initiatives that not only address transport poverty in urban cores, but also in the surrounding communities. According to Statistics Canada, this rapid urbanization emphasizes the “need for infrastructure, transportation and services of all kinds” (2022).

3. **Focus on the General Population:** While many Canadian community initiatives in the catalogue have a focus on equity-deserving groups, the majority (58%, 155 initiatives) are open to the general public. An example of this would be a community bicycle collective which welcomes anyone needing to work on their bicycle. Having initiatives open to the general public makes them accessible to a wider audience, but it may not focus or specialize efforts to serve those who are most in need. To fundamentally address transport poverty, transportation systems must move towards a model of mobility justice. There is an imperative to identify challenges for communities experiencing transport poverty and create tailored solutions that work for them.

Diversifying the transportation modes and built environments being served, while also targeting equity-deserving groups, will help Canada to achieve transport equity. This catalogue provides a foundation of understanding on Canadian grassroots initiatives working to address transport poverty. Recording and analyzing the initiatives outlines the current work being done and the remaining gaps in access to transportation options. Through this work and continued research, we can begin to formulate targeted solutions and evidence-based policies that will move Canada towards greater mobility justice.

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Appendix

Transport Poverty Community Initiatives Catalogue ([Version 2](#)).

Acknowledgements

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