

Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty: Year 5 Report and Catalogue

Research
Report

November
2025

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**MOBILIZING
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	Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada (HICC)	Transit App
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City of Calgary	RideShark	Urban Strategies
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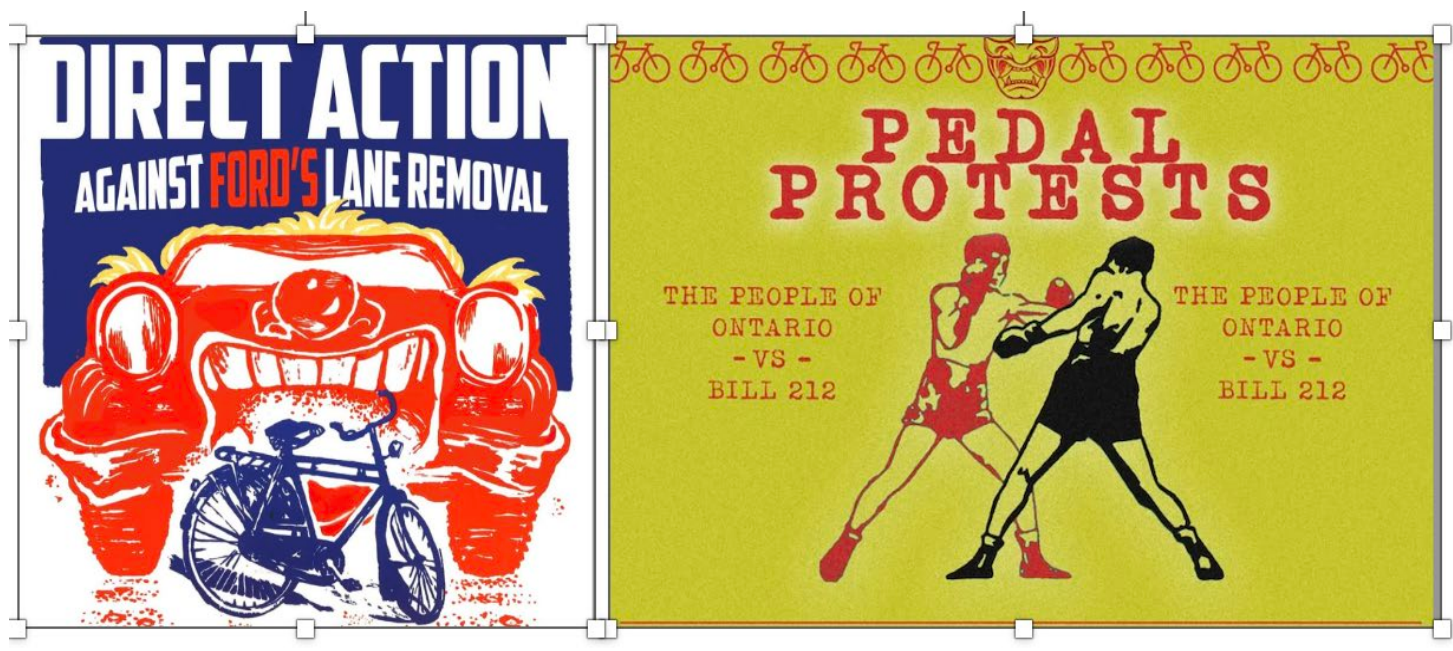


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Introduction

The [*Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty Catalogue*](#) is a collaborative project between the Mobilizing Justice Theme 2 Transportation Modes team and The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT) at Climate Action Partnership. The catalogue compiles community initiatives across Canada that promote transport equity by expanding transportation options, particularly for people experiencing transport poverty. Community initiatives for the purposes of this catalogue include grassroots coalitions or programs of larger non-profit or charitable organizations with a partial or central focus on transportation.

In the summer of 2021, graduate intern Sabat Ismail conducted a scan of community initiatives addressing transport poverty and increasing modal choices across Canada, resulting in the *Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty* catalogue and accompanying [report](#). This first iteration contained 13 variables: 1) community initiative name, 2) host organization, 3) location, 4) region, 5) collaborating partners, 6) explicit focus on transport poverty, 7) population focus, 8) mode focus, 9) programming & projects, 10) web page, 11) key players, 12) highlighted/flagged for unique approach, 13) description) for each of the 245 community-led initiatives. While every effort was made to capture as many initiatives as possible, some were likely missed, as with every subsequent iteration of the catalogue.

In 2022, intern Kara Martin updated the catalogue. Two variables were dropped (population focus and key players) and four new variables were added: 1) equity-deserving focus, 2) equity-deserving led, 3) built environment type, and 4) researcher who added the initiative, resulting in 15 attributes for 266 initiatives. The catalogue was updated with initiatives from regions that were previously underrepresented, and more focus was added to specific equity-deserving groups and how their needs are (or are not) being met. The updated catalogue, accompanying [report](#) and [blog post](#) were released in August 2022.

In 2023, graduate student Helena Lin created an interactive map to provide a visual overview of the catalogue's community initiatives. It provides a way for advocates, academics, and practitioners alike to explore and learn about the wide range of inspiring ways that communities support transport equity. Nancy Smith Lea updated the catalogue (including splitting up the "location" variable into "address", "city" and



“province” so the information could be retrieved more easily for the map) bringing the total to 17 attributes for 293 community initiatives, and wrote a [blog post](#) providing a sampling of new highlights and suggestions for how the catalogue and map could be used.

In 2024, graduate student Christine Yanagawa further updated the catalogue and web map to include 335 active community initiatives and created a new archive database to document discontinued or completed initiatives. The number of variables tracked increased to 20, as, following recommendations from Mobilizing Justice’s Community and Equity Advisory Table (CEAT), three new attributes were added: 1) to provide more information about the host organizations, 2) to explore how low income is defined, and 3) whether intersectionality is considered. Christine also produced a [report](#) and Nancy Smith Lea wrote a [blog post](#).

This report, and accompanying [blog post](#), was produced in 2025 by Nancy Smith Lea, who also updated the catalogue. Moreno Zanutto, a researcher at Simon Fraser University, updated the [web map](#).

Methodology

In this 2025 update, 51 new initiatives were added and 27 archived into the catalogue, which is a living Google spreadsheet that has been continually refined by multiple researchers over time. There are now 359 active community initiatives in the catalogue and 55 that were discontinued or completed. As with previous iterations, new community initiatives were identified through Google searches, Facebook and Instagram scans, news articles, newsletters, and personal networks.

The first step in the updating process was to check each of the initiatives listed in the 2024 catalogue to see if they were still active or if any major changes had transpired since the last update. For those initiatives that were found to no longer be active, they were moved into the archive worksheet and annotated with the reason they were archived. Typically, an initiative is archived if the website no longer exists or if there is no longer any activity on their social media platform.

Following the updating of existing initiatives, the 51 new initiatives that had been identified were added to the spreadsheet. They were categorized according to the same 20 variables as in the previous year's update:

- 1) Community initiative name
- 2) Host organization: the larger umbrella organization that hosts and supports the community initiative (if any)
- 3) Type of organization: 1) Registered charity, 2) Non-profit, 3) Grassroots, or 4) Other (e.g. co-ops, student-run community bike shops and workshops, social enterprises)
- 4) Address
- 5) City
- 6) Province
- 7) Region: 1) Atlantic, 2) British Columbia, 3) North, 4) Ontario, 5) Prairies, 6) Québec, or 7) National
- 8) Collaborating partners
- 9) Explicit focus on transport poverty? (yes/no)
- 10) Equity-deserving focus? (yes/no). If yes, focus category: 1) Children and Youth, 2) Housing Insecure, 3) Incarcerated (friends and families of), 4) Indigenous, 5) Low income, 6) Newcomers, 7) People with Disabilities, 8) Racialized, 9) Seniors, 10) Women and Girls, and/or 11) 2SLGBTQ+
- 11) Equity-deserving led? (yes/no)
- 12) Built environment: 1) Urban, 2) Suburban, 3) Exurban, or 4) Rural
- 13) Low-income definition (if defined)
- 14) Intersectionality focus? (yes/no)
- 15) Mode focus: 1) Active transportation, 2) Walking, 3) Cycling, 4) Public transit, 5) Sustainable transportation, or 6) Driving
- 16) Programming & projects: complementary programs and projects the host organization leads
- 17) Web page or social media
- 18) Highlighted/flagged: Initiatives that may be of particular interest (e.g. unique approach to addressing transport poverty that could be shared or modelled)
- 19) Description: Brief overview (approx. 100 words) of the community initiative (and host organization if any), who leads it, the date it was launched, its vision/mission, what it does, etc.

20) Initiative added by: Initials of researcher who added the initiative.

Once the spreadsheet was fully populated, charts were created to gain insights into where the initiatives are taking place, which transport modes are being addressed, the type of host organizations, and the extent to which transport poverty and equity-deserving communities are being served.

Finally, the data for all five years of the catalogue (2021-2025) was compiled for three of the variables (region, transportation mode and equity-deserving focus) to explore whether there have been any notable shifts over time.

Findings

Below are the results of the analysis that provides insights into a selection of the variables being tracked. First, we provide a breakdown of the parts of the country and the type of built environment where the community initiatives are taking place. Next, the mode of transportation focus is described, followed by a review of initiatives with an equity-deserving focus. For readers who may be interested in digging further into some of the variables that are not highlighted within this report, there are additional charts that were created that can be viewed within the catalogue spreadsheet.

1. **Initiatives by region.** As shown in Figure 1 below, the greatest number of the 359 community initiatives within the catalogue are based in Ontario (147; 41%), followed by Quebec (59; 16%), British Columbia (48; 13%), the Prairies (58; 16%), Atlantic Canada (36; 10%), National (8; 2%), and the North (3; 1%). These numbers loosely reflect the relative proportion of the Canadian population that lives in each region, although there are some variances: 39% of the Canadian population live in Ontario (41% of initiatives), 22% in Quebec (16%), 14% in BC (13%), 19% in the Prairies (16%), 7% in the Atlantic provinces (10%), and less than 1% live in the North (<1%). (Statistics Canada, 2025a)

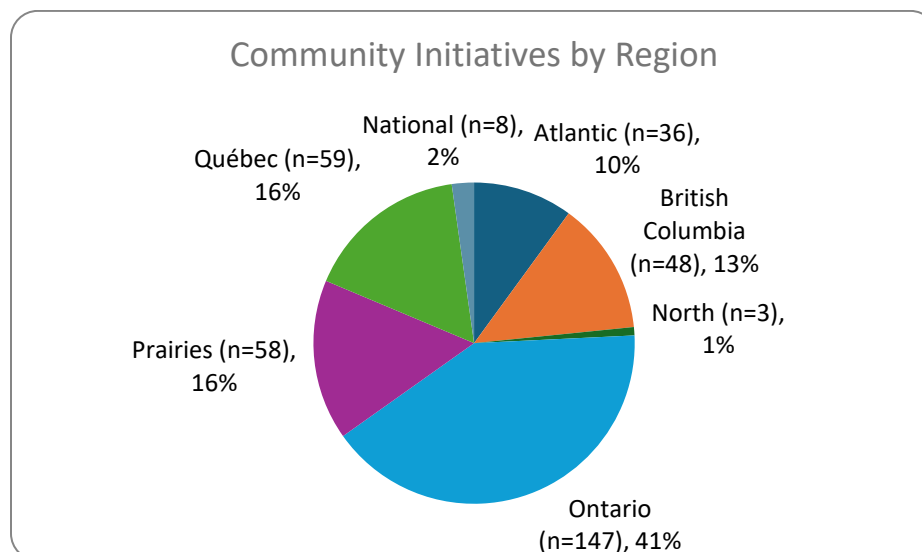


Figure 1. Community Initiatives by Region, 2025

The first iteration of the catalogue, launched in 2021, contained 245 initiatives. In 2025, the catalogue contains 359 initiatives, representing a 47% increase. An exploration of how the number of community initiatives by region has changed over the past five years (Figure 2) reveals a gradual increase overall for most regions, with the exception of Ontario where there was a sharp 27% increase in the past year (from 116 to 147 initiatives). This is at least partly due to Ontario's recent controversial legislation to restrict bike lane construction ([Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024](#)) and to ban speed cameras ([Bill 56, Building a More Competitive Economy Act, 2025](#)). Both of these bills resulted in a strong community response, mostly in opposition (e.g. [Cycle Toronto's successful court challenge, East End Vs Bill 212](#) and [Safe Parkside](#)), but also a couple of initiatives were launched in support (e.g. [Balance on Bloor](#)).

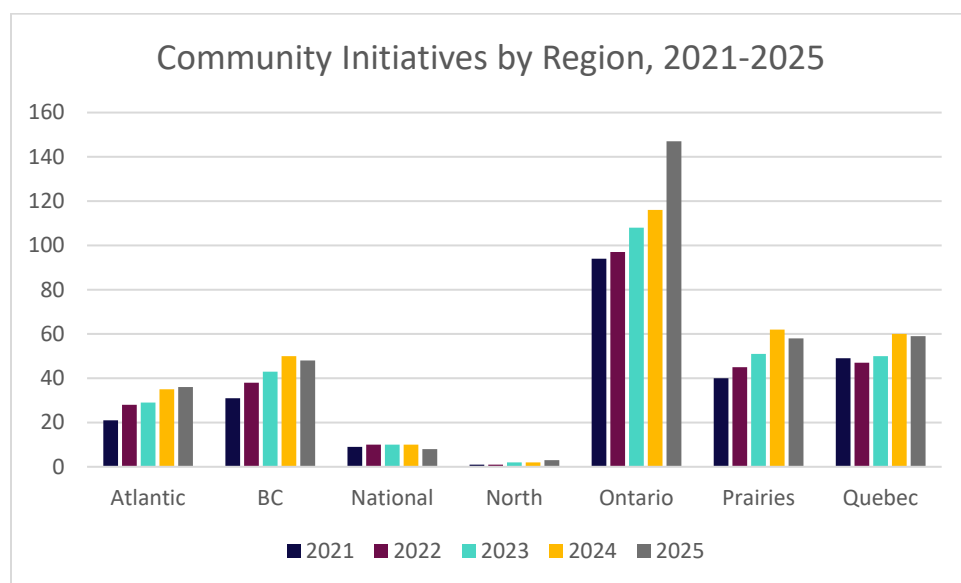


Figure 2. Community Initiatives by Region, 2021-2025

2. **Initiatives by geography.** Similar to previous iterations of the catalogue, the greatest number of initiatives are found in the urban context (213; 59%), followed by the rural context (69; 19%), in suburban communities (59; 17%), and finally, exurban (18; 5%) (Figure 3).

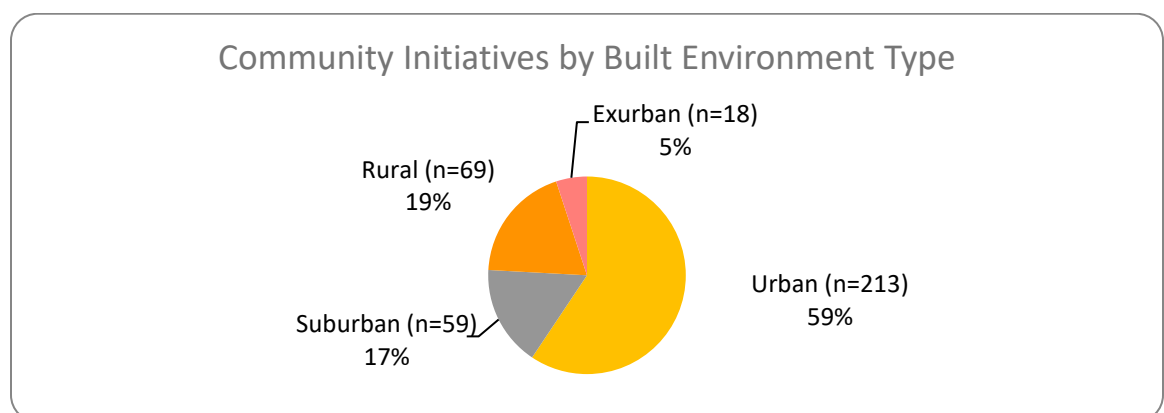


Figure 3. Community Initiatives by Built Environment Type, 2025

3. **Initiatives by mode of transportation.** As with previous versions of the catalogue, the travel option that community initiatives focus on most is cycling (164; 46%), followed by public transit (49; 13%), active transportation (47; 13%), sustainable transportation (29; 8%), and walking (14; 4%). There are also three (1%) of the community initiatives that are focused on improving accessibility for people using horses for transportation. (Figure 4).

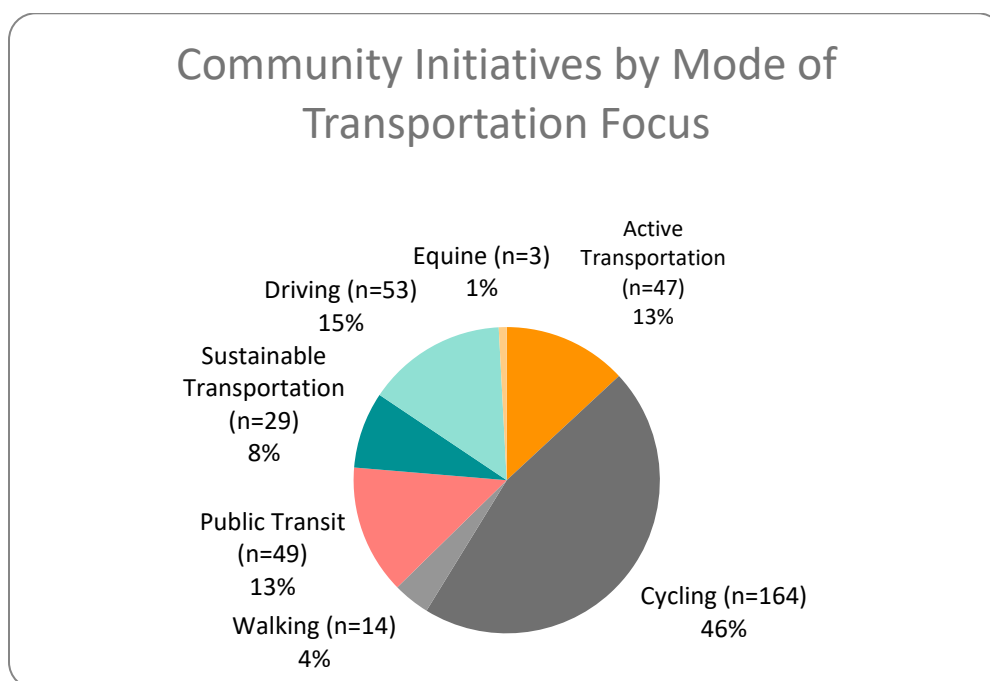


Figure 4. Community Initiatives by Mode of Transportation Focus, 2025

Examining how the mode of transportation focus has changed between 2021 and 2025 (Figure 5), we see that cycling initiatives have increased the most, a steady increase has been documented for active transportation, driving, sustainable transportation, and walking initiatives, and a slight decrease was found in the number of public transit initiatives. While every effort was made to cast a wide net in the research phase, particularly to find driving initiatives (the first catalogue contained only rideshare, and now assisted driving services and driving advocacy programs are tracked), the dramatic increase in cycling initiatives could simply be a result of these programs being more organically on the authors' radar, compared to other modes. However, as noted above, the current backlash against bike lane infrastructure has resulted in a pronounced increase in cycling initiatives.

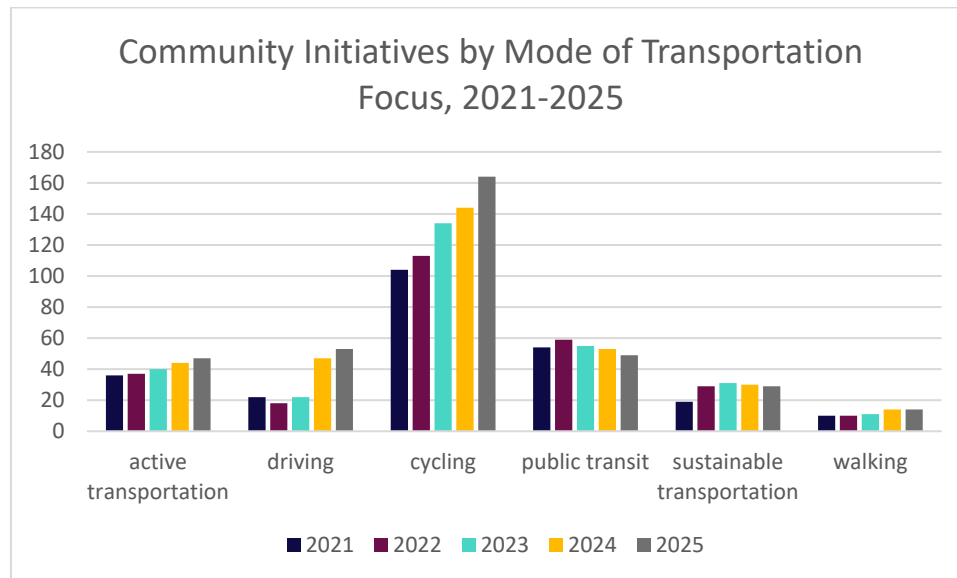


Figure 5. Community Initiatives by Mode of Transportation Focus, 2021-2025

Clearly, despite a bump in the number of driving initiatives, community efforts in this country continue to focus primarily on improving transportation options beyond the automobile. There is a stark distinction between the focus of these initiatives as compared to how Canadians get to work (Figure 6). In 2025, according to Statistics Canada (2025b), 81% of the population commuted by car, truck or van, 12% on public transit and 6% using active transportation. There has been only slight variation in commute patterns over the past five years, primarily in public transit usage, which is the mode of transportation impacted the most during the pandemic. The documented community efforts to mobilize around alternatives to the automobile speaks to a demand for tackling this country's car dependence.

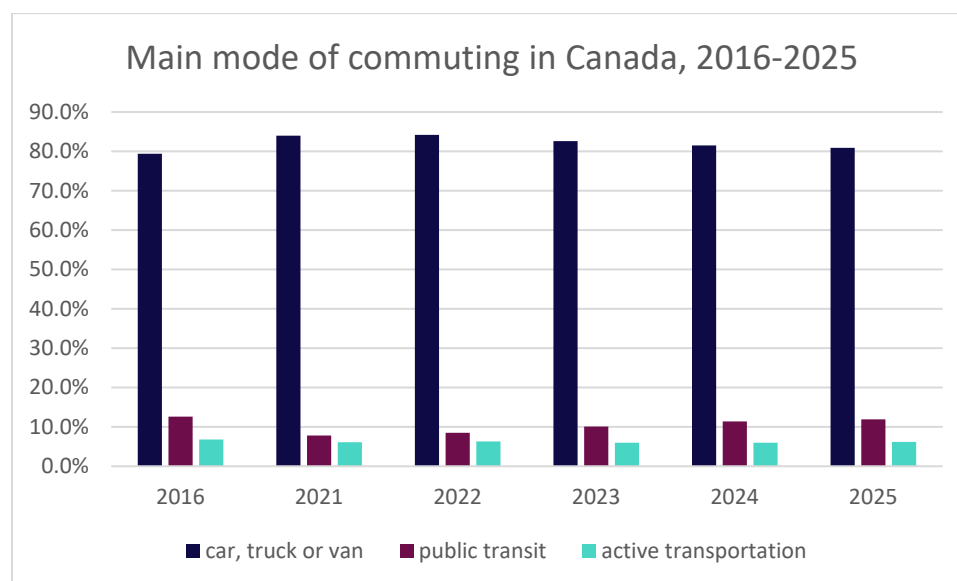


Figure 6. Main Mode of Commuting in Canada, 2016-2025 (Statistics Canada)

4. **Initiatives with equity-deserving focus.** Of the 359 community initiatives, close to half (155; 43%) have a focus on equity-deserving populations. Of those that do, the most prevalent area of focus is people experiencing low-income (82; 32%), followed by seniors (39; 15%), people with disabilities (32; 13%), racialized and indigenous people (28; 11%), children and youth (26; 10%), newcomers (13; 5%) and other (34; 14%). Within the “other” category there are programs and services for LGBTQ+ people, women and girls, people who are housing insecure, and friends and families of incarcerated Canadians.

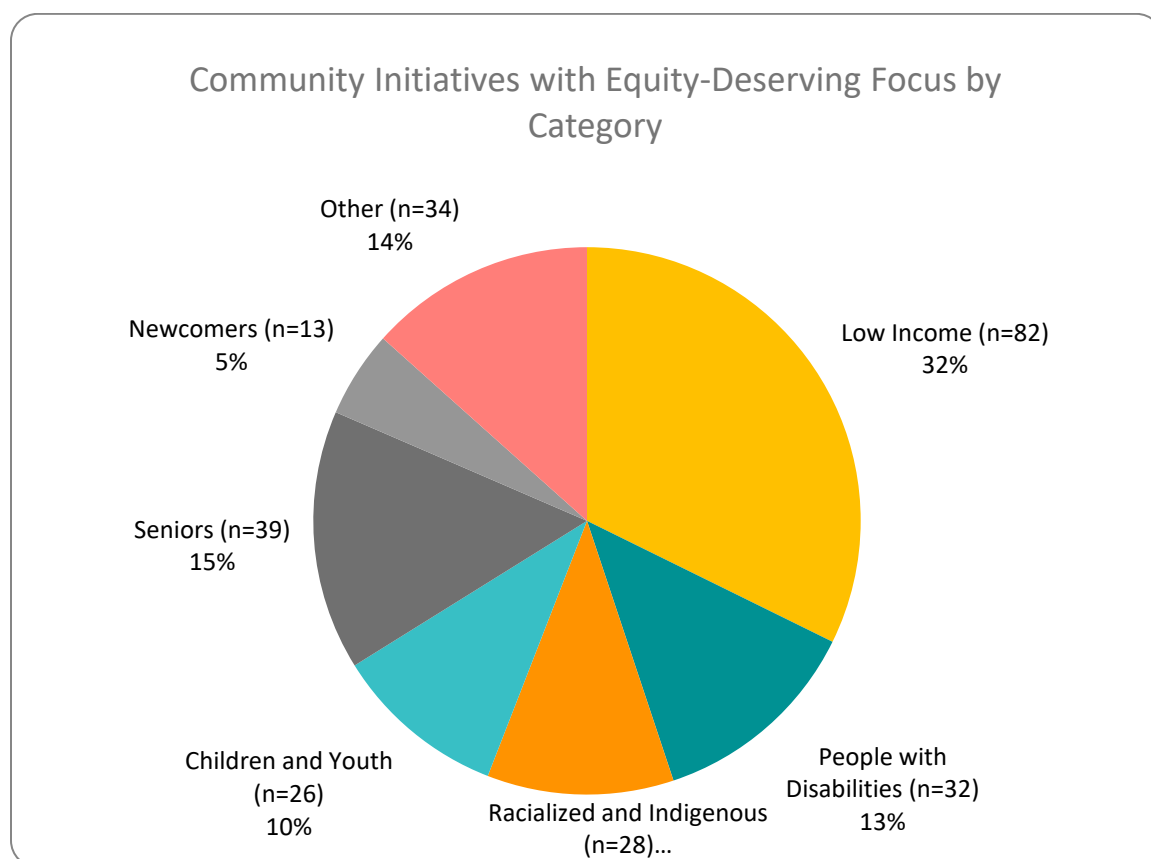


Figure 7. Community Initiatives with Equity-Deserving Focus by Category, 2025

Examining how the number of initiatives with an equity-deserving focus has changed between 2022 (the first year we started tracking this variable) and 2025, we see a gradual increase over time, from 111 in 2022 to 158 in 2024, a 42% increase, with a levelling off to 155 in 2025 (Figure 8). With this year's termination of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies and programs in the U.S., concerns have been raised about potential impacts here in Canada, especially for [healthcare, education and research](#), as well as the [labour movement](#). Within the transportation equity non-profit sector at least, our tracking to date indicates that commitment to DEI in Canada is staying relatively stable.

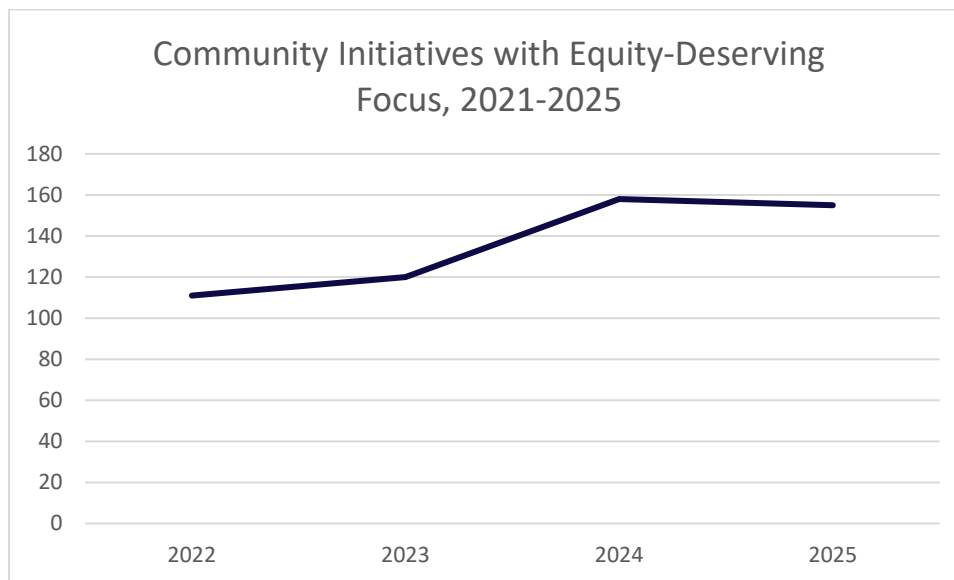


Figure 8. Community Initiatives with Equity-Deserving Focus, 2022-2025

Conclusions

We have now completed five years of monitoring and documenting community action in Canada that are working towards transportation equity. In the updated version of the *Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty Catalogue*, there are now 359 active community initiatives categorized according to 20 variables. For three of the variables (region, transportation mode and equity-deserving focus), the data for all five years of the catalogue were compiled to explore whether there had been any notable shifts over time. Some highlights from this analysis include:

1. **The distribution of where community initiatives in the catalogue are located is reflective of where people live.** The number of initiatives in each region have all gradually increased over time proportionately to their population. Ontario was somewhat of an outlier in this 2025 update with a sharp 27% increase in community initiatives over the past year, at least partly due to new legislation to restrict bike lanes and ban speed cameras.
2. **The travel mode with the highest community response is cycling, and the number of related initiatives has continued to increase over time.** The focused activity on cycling has happened against a backdrop of the automobile persisting as Canadian's predominant commute to work mode. Clearly, despite a bump in the number of driving-focused initiatives, community efforts in this country continue to focus on improving transportation options beyond the automobile.
3. **Close to half of the community initiatives focus on equity-deserving populations.** The most prevalent area of focus is people experiencing low-income. We saw a gradual increase of initiatives with an equity-deserving focus between 2022 and 2024 (from 111 to 158) and a slight leveling off in 2025 (to 155). Within the transportation equity non-profit sector at least, our tracking to date indicates that commitment to DEI in Canada is staying relatively stable.



Our intention with this catalogue is to provide a foundation for understanding Canadian community initiatives working to address transport poverty and increase transportation options beyond the private automobile. We hope it will continue to be useful for advocates and practitioners alike to better understand the transportation barriers and adaptive practices being implemented across Canada and ultimately inform the development of evidence-based policy recommendations to advance transport equity.

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Appendix

[Transport Poverty Community Initiatives Catalogue \(Version 5\)](#)

Acknowledgements

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