

Connecting Canadians with Nature: A Shared Agenda between Parks Canada Agency and the Public Health Agency of Canada

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Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada

Objectives

- To highlight the importance of positive mental health and its link to nature
- To present priorities and areas of alignment of the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Parks Canada Agency
- To stimulate discussion and gain insight on challenges and tangible opportunities to advance mental health and connecting Canadians with nature



What is Positive Mental Health?

- Capacity to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance the ability to enjoy life and deal with challenges
- Resource for everyday living that provides benefits for Canadians with and without mental illness
- Promoting mental health is a critical strategy to:
 - Prevent mental illness;
 - Support recovery among people living with mental illness; and
 - Strengthen health, social and economic well-being.



How are Canadians doing?

- At least one in three Canadians (about 9.1 million people) will be affected by a mental illness or substance use disorder during their lifetime
- An average of 11 Canadians die by suicide each day.
- Only 57% of adults and 43% of youth in Canada report they have the ability to handle unexpected and difficult problems and day-to-day demands
- Low income and unemployed Canadians, adults with less than a high school education, Indigenous peoples and bisexual or gay/lesbian adults are more likely to report low self-rated mental health



Public Health Agency of Canada's Mental Health Agenda

The Vision

Resilient people in Canada living in communities supportive of positive mental health for all.
We can do this by promoting wellness, reducing risk factors, improving access to quality mental health services
and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness.

Objectives

Enhancing resilience

Reducing risks and addressing the
impacts of trauma

Informing evidence-based, high-quality
and safe mental health services

Continuum of Actions

Enhancing societal
conditions for mental
health in
collaboration with
other sectors

Supporting safe
and inclusive
communities

Building protective
factors for mental
health by supporting
positive parenting,
youth engagement
and healthy
relationships

Reducing risk
factors for mental
illness, preventing
suicide and
addressing
trauma

Equipping
health and
social service
professionals to
provide safe
and appropriate
care

Health Canada is the
lead for improving
access to mental
health services with
Provinces/Territories

Enhancing wellbeing and quality of life

Early intervention and prevention

Supporting recovery and wellbeing

Promotion

Prevention

Treatment

Foundational Actions

Providing trusted and useful information for practitioners/providers and Canadians

Advancing applied research to inform best practices in mental health promotion

Reporting, developing and enhancing surveillance data to drive decisions

Promoting mental health involves action across sectors

Collective Impact for Canadians

Decreased health inequalities

Increased individual and community wellbeing

Reduced stigma, self-harm and suicide

Lower prevalence of mental illness

Improved capacity of health and social professionals



Working in collaboration with:

- Other Federal Departments
- National Indigenous Organizations
- Non Government Organizations
- Academic Institutions
- Provinces and Territories
- Philanthropic Organizations
- Private Sector
- International Organizations
- People with lived experiences
- Health Portfolio (Health Canada and Canadian Institutes of Health Research)
- Pan-Canadian Health Organizations



Current Activities at the Public Health Agency of Canada

- Mental Health Promotion Innovation Fund
 - Catalyse and scale evidence-based mental health promotion interventions
- Positive Mental Health Surveillance Indicator Framework
 - Monitors and reports on positive mental health and its determinants for adults and youth
 - Available from <https://infobase.phac-aspc.gc.ca/positive-mental-health/>
- Collaborating with other federal departments to:
 - Increase awareness, understanding and capacity about mental health promotion
 - Measure impact of federal social and environmental investments on mental health



Nature and Positive Mental Health

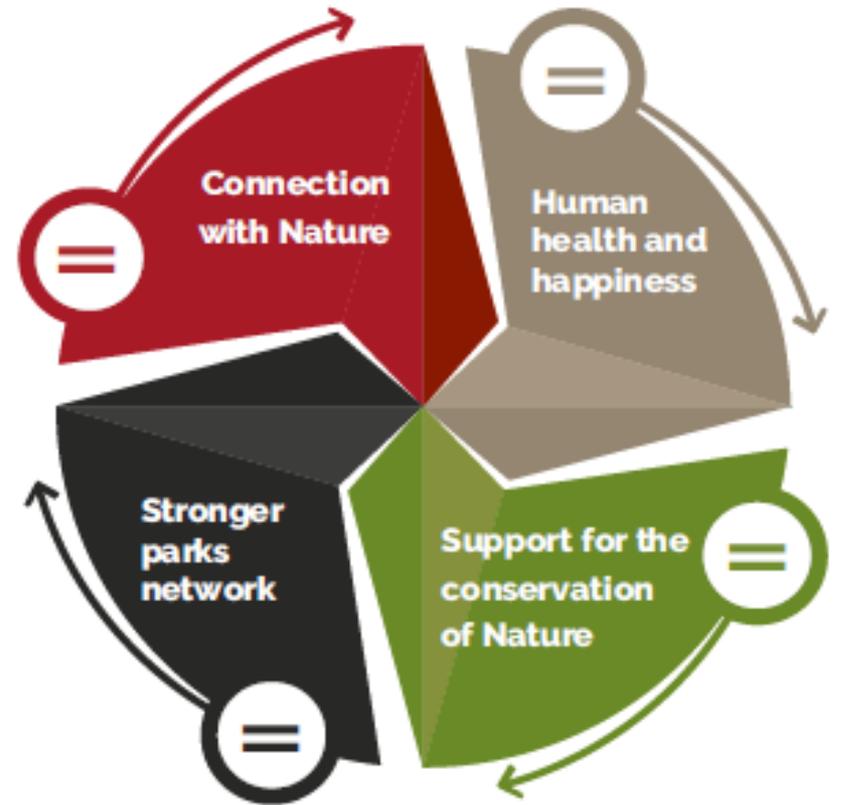
- Green spaces are linked to better mental health either directly through its restorative effectiveness or indirectly by promoting protective factors for mental health such as physical activity and social interaction
- Research on connecting people with nature to improve mental health is limited, but growing
- Opportunities exist to strengthen environmental measures and data on PHAC's Positive Mental Health Surveillance Indicator Framework:

Indicator Group	Life Course Group	Indicator Measure(s)	Latest Data	Source (Year)	Description
Neighbourhood Built Environment	Adult (18 + years)	In development	NA	NA	NA
	Youth (12-17 years)	% of grade 6–10 students who report there are places such as recreation centres, parks and shopping centres to spend free time in the area where they live	74.20%	HBSC (2013–2014)	NA



Priorities in connecting Canadians with nature for positive mental health

- Collaborate.
- Connect.
- Conserve.
- Lead.



PARKS FOR ALL



Opportunities for collaboration

Partnerships

#NatureForAll, Parks for All

Accessibility & Inclusion

Access to nature and healthy experiences

Evidence

Contributing to the knowledge base (science, traditional wisdom)



Starting Points for Discussion

- 1. Partnerships:** Building capacity across mental health and environment/conservation sectors
 - Are there partnerships between sectors at the local level?
 - What is needed to strengthen evaluation and knowledge sharing to understand what nature interventions work, for whom, and in what context, to promote mental health?
- 2. Accessibility and Inclusion:** Maximising opportunities for every Canadian to access natural environments
 - How can we promote access to nature (and address environmental and mental health inequalities) for vulnerable groups?
- 3. Evidence:** Contributing to the advancement of research and surveillance efforts
 - What indicators and data sources could be used to monitor the impacts of nature and environmental factors on mental health?

