



Sport Participation in Canada

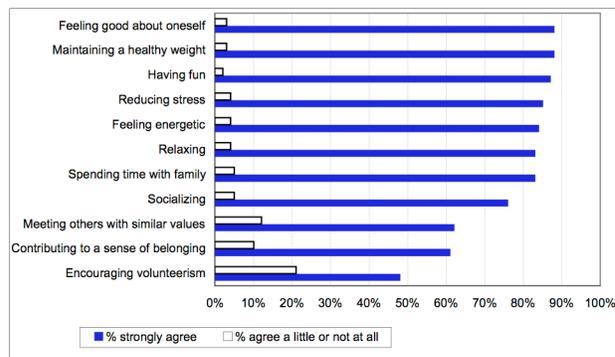
Beliefs Associated with the Benefits of Regular Sport Participation

Individuals' beliefs about the outcomes of their actions are associated with participation, increasing the chances that they will be active. The 2006-2007 Sport Monitor examined some short- and long-term outcomes that an individual could expect to achieve as a result of regular sport participation.

When asked about their personal beliefs regarding the potential beneficial and detrimental aspects of sport participation, Canadian adults offer predominantly positive responses. Overall, a majority of Canadians strongly agree that sport participation contributes to:

- * Maintaining a healthy weight, 88%
- * Feeling good about oneself, 88%
- * Having fun, 87%
- * Reducing stress, 85%
- * Feeling energetic, 84%
- * Spending time with family, 83%
- * Relaxing, 83%
- * Socializing, 76%
- * Meeting others with similar values, 62%
- * Contributing to a sense of belonging, 61%
- * Encouraging volunteerism, 48%

FIGURE 1: POSITIVE BELIEFS, OVERALL

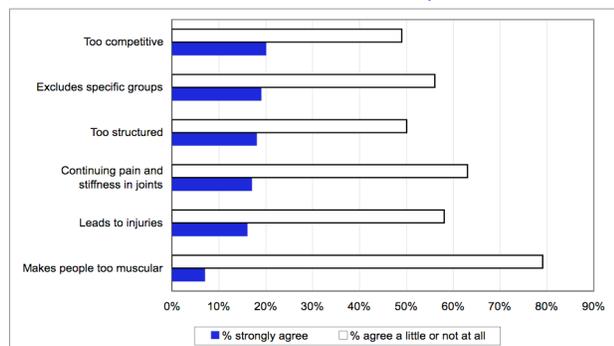


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Further, Figure 2 illustrates the strength of negative beliefs of Canadians associated with regular sport participation. The majority of Canadians agree only a little or do not agree at all, and relatively few agree strongly, that sport participation:

- * perpetuates joint pain or stiffness (63% agree a little or not at all versus only 17% who strongly agree),
- * leads to injuries (58% agree a little or not at all, versus only 16% who strongly agree),
- * makes people too muscular (79% agree a little or not at all versus only 7% who strongly agree),
- * excludes specific groups (56% agree a little or not at all compared to only 19% who strongly agree),
- * is too competitive (49% agree a little or not at all and only 20% strongly agree),
- * is too structured (50% agree a little or not at all versus only 18% who agree strongly).

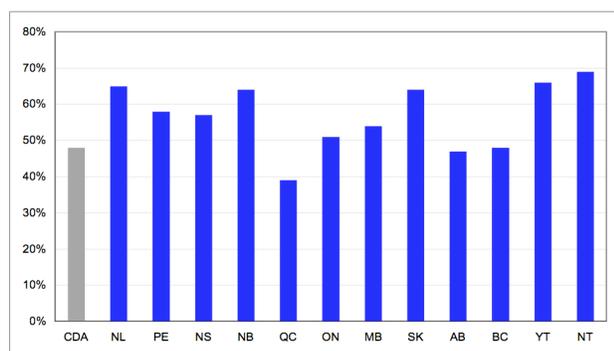
FIGURE 2: NEGATIVE BELIEFS, OVERALL



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Region There are few significant differences in reported beliefs associated with the benefits of sport participation by province and territory. In terms of positive beliefs, those living in Quebec are less likely than the national average to strongly agree that regular sport participation helps people socialize. Residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories are more likely to strongly agree that sport participation encourages people to volunteer in their communities, whereas those in Quebec are less likely to report this. Meanwhile, adults residing in Prince Edward Island and Manitoba are less likely than the national average whereas those in Quebec are more likely to not agree at all or agree only a little that sport participation encourages people to volunteer. Residents of Canada’s North are more likely than average to agree that sport participation helps to reduce stress.

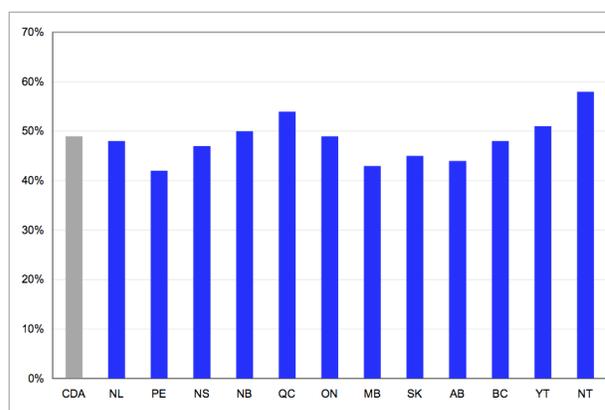
FIGURE 3: BELIEF THAT SPORT ENCOURAGES VOLUNTEERISM BY PROVINCE
% who strongly agree



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In terms of negative beliefs, fewer provincial and territorial differences exist. Adults living in Nova Scotia are less likely than the average Canadian to state that they agree a little or not at all that participation in sport excludes specific groups. Those living in the Northwest Territories and Quebec are more likely than the national average to not agree at all or to agree only a little that sport participation is too competitive.

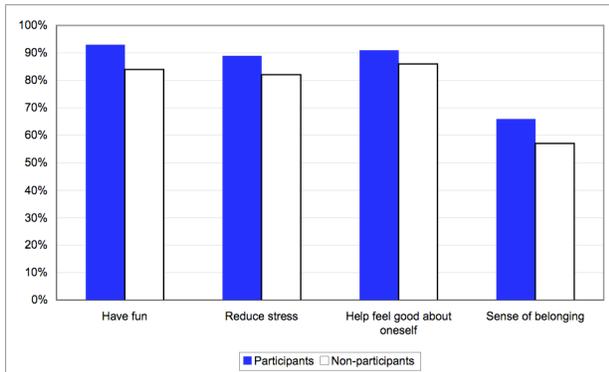
FIGURE 4: BELIEF OF SPORT AS TOO COMPETITIVE BY PROVINCE
% who agree a little or not at all



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Sport participation Sport participants are more likely than those who do not participate to strongly agree that regular sport participation helps people socialize. Similarly, sport participants are more likely to strongly agree that participation helps people have fun, reduces stress, helps people to feel good about themselves, and provides a sense of belonging. Moreover, participants are more likely to strongly agree that sport participation helps people to relax, whereas non-participants are more likely to not agree or only agree a little with this statement.

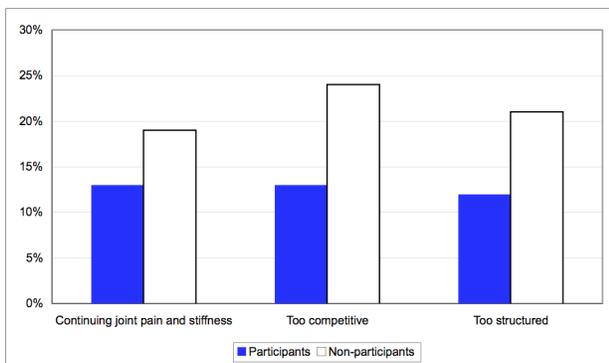
FIGURE 5: POSITIVE BELIEFS BY SPORT PARTICIPATION
% who strongly agree



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Conversely, those who do not participate in sport are more likely than participants to strongly agree that regular sport participation leads to pain and stiffness in joints, is too competitive, or is too structured, while participants are more likely to not agree or to agree only a little with this statement. Sport participants are also more likely to not agree or to agree only a little that regular participation in sport makes people too muscular.

FIGURE 6: NEGATIVE BELIEFS BY SPORT PARTICIPATION
% who strongly agree

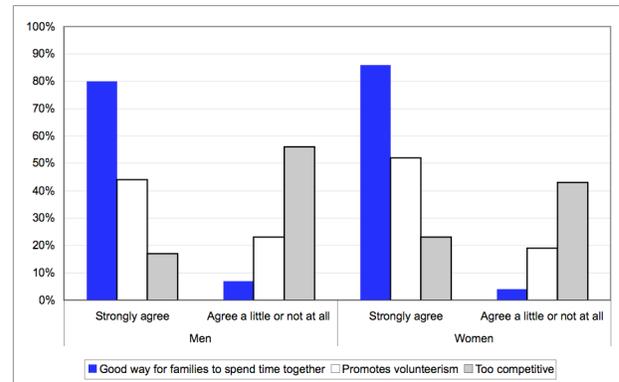


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Age and sex Women are more likely than men to strongly agree that sport participation is a good way for families to spend time together, whereas men are more likely to not agree at all or to agree only a little with this statement. Women are also more likely than men to strongly agree

that sport participation encourages people to volunteer in their communities.

FIGURE 7: BELIEFS BY SEX



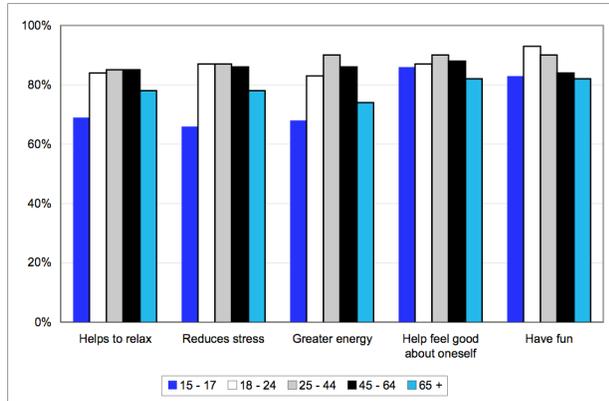
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In terms of negative beliefs, women are more likely than men to strongly agree that sport participation is too competitive, whereas men are more likely than women to agree a little or not at all with this.

Compared to those aged 25 to 64, older Canadians (aged 65 and older) are more likely to not agree or to agree only a little that sport participation helps people socialize, and, compared to 25 to 44 year olds, that regular sport participation contributes to maintaining a healthy weight, helps people relax, and reduces stress. Furthermore, older Canadians are less likely than those aged 25 to 64 to strongly agree that sport participation helps people feel full of energy and improves self-esteem. In contrast, older Canadians are more likely than those aged 18 to 44 to strongly agree that sport participation encourages volunteerism and are the most likely to strongly agree that it provides a way to meet others who have the same values in life. Those aged 18 to 44 are more likely than those aged 45 and older to strongly agree that regular participation in sport helps people have fun, whereas those aged 45 and older are more likely than those aged 15 to 17 to strongly agree that sport participation is a good way for families to spend time together. Finally, those aged 18 to 24 are more likely than those aged 25

to 64 to strongly agree that regular sport participation provides a sense of belonging.

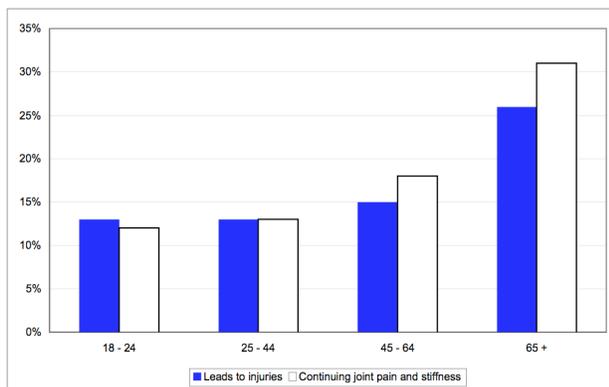
FIGURE 8: POSITIVE BELIEFS BY AGE
% who strongly agree



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There are also relationships between negative beliefs and age. Namely, older Canadians (65 years or older) are more likely than those aged 25 to 64 to strongly agree that sport participation makes people too muscular; further, they are also generally the most likely to strongly agree that sport participation is too structured or leads to joint pain or stiffness. In fact, among adults aged 25 or older, the likelihood of agreeing a little or not at all that sport participation leads to joint pain and stiffness decreases among subsequently older age groups. In addition, older adults are more likely than 25 to 44 year olds to strongly agree that sport participation excludes specific groups or that it is too competitive.

FIGURE 9: NEGATIVE BELIEFS BY AGE
% who strongly agree



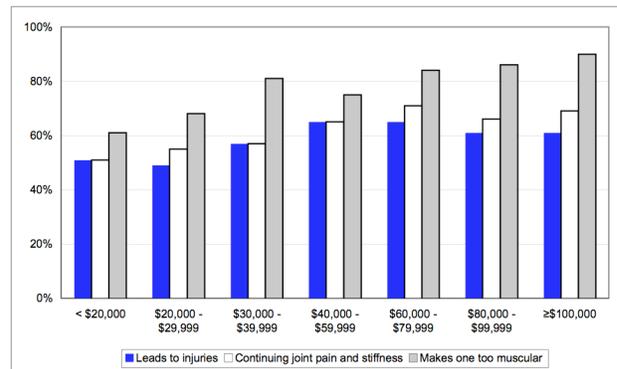
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Socio-economic and demographic characteristics

Those within the highest income group (with annual household incomes of \$100,000 or greater) are slightly more likely to strongly agree that participation helps people feel full of energy compared to those within the lowest income group (with annual household incomes under \$20,000); however, the converse relationship is true for perceptions that sport is a way of meeting others with shared values or that it provides a sense of belonging. There are some other differences related to positive beliefs (for example, helping people to socialize) with household income; however, the relationships are not always clear.

Regarding negative perceptions about sport participation, adults with higher annual household incomes (\$60,000 or greater) are more likely than those in some lower income groups to not agree at all or agree only a little that sport leads to pain and stiffness in joints, that it makes people too muscular, or that it is too structured. Canadians in the highest income group (with annual household incomes of \$100,000 or greater) are less likely than those in lower income groups (with annual household incomes less than \$60,000) to strongly agree that sport excludes specific groups.

FIGURE 10: NEGATIVE BELIEFS BY INCOME
% who agree a little or not at all

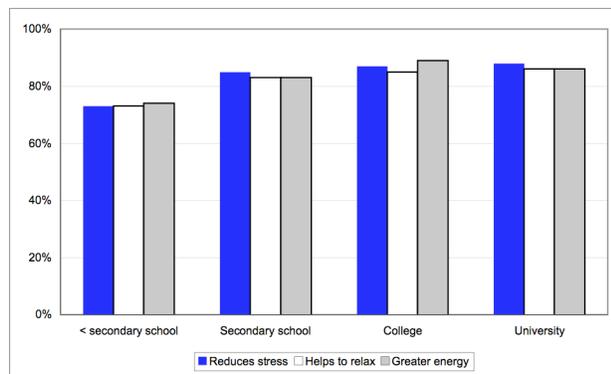


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Compared to others with higher levels of education, adults with less than secondary education generally are less likely to strongly

agree and more likely to not agree at all or to agree only a little that sport participation helps people relax, reduces stress, and helps people feel full of energy. Similarly, those with less than secondary education are less likely than those with a college education to strongly agree that sport helps build their self confidence or helps them feel good about themselves. Conversely, those with a secondary education are more likely to strongly agree that sport participation provides a way to meet others who have similar values, and those with less than secondary education are more likely than those with higher levels of education to state that it encourages people to volunteer in their communities.

FIGURE 11: POSITIVE BELIEFS BY EDUCATION
% who strongly agree



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Those with less than secondary education are more likely than those with post-secondary education to strongly agree that regular sport participation leads to pain and stiffness in joints, makes people too muscular, is too structured, and excludes specific groups. Adults with a university education are least likely to strongly agree that sport participation is too competitive and are more likely than those with a secondary or lesser education to not agree or to agree only a little with this.

Canadians who work full-time are more likely than retirees to strongly agree that sport participation leads to feeling greater energy levels and are less likely than retirees to strongly agree that sport results in continuing joint

stiffness and pain. Homemakers are more likely than average Canadian to agree that sport is good for relaxation and that sport leads to a sense of belonging. Homemakers are more likely than retirees to strongly agree that participating in sport contributes to having fun. Retired Canadians are less likely than average to agree a little or not at all that sport is too structured.

There are some significant differences regarding positive beliefs about the benefits of sport participation and community size: Those living in the largest communities (with over 1,000,000 residents) are less likely than those living in mid-size communities (with 100,000 to 249,999 residents) to strongly agree that sport helps people socialize or provides a sense of belonging, and those in communities with 500,000 or more residents are generally less likely than others (specifically those living in communities with 100,000 to 249,999 or 1,000 to 4,999 residents) to strongly agree that sport provides a way to meet others with shared values.

Residents of the largest communities (with populations of 500,000 or more) are less likely than those living in communities with 10,000 to 29,999 residents to strongly agree that sport is too structured. In addition, perception that sport is too competitive varies by community size, but the relationship is not clear.

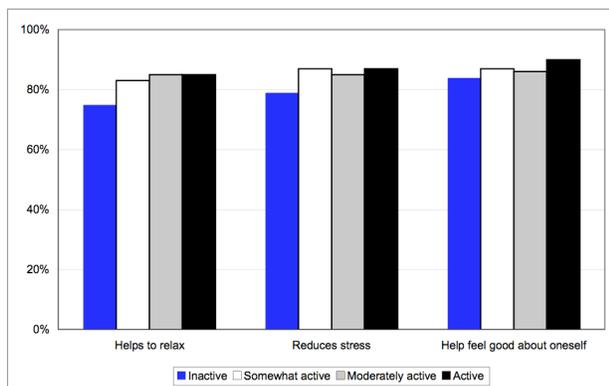
Married Canadians are more likely than never married Canadians to strongly agree that sport participation helps people to relax. Widowed, divorced, and separated Canadians are more likely than others to strongly agree that sport participation leads to meeting others with the same values in life, that participation encourages volunteerism, and that sport is a good way for families to spend time together.

Those who are widowed, divorced, or separated are more likely than those who have never been married to strongly agree that sport participation leads to pain and stiffness in joints, whereas those who have never been married are more

likely to not agree or to agree only a little with this statement. This finding, however, may potentially be influenced by age, as older adults are more likely than young adults to have been married, and are also more likely to strongly agree that sport participation leads to pain and stiffness in joints. Those who are widowed, divorced, or separated are more likely than those who are married or in common law relationships to strongly agree that sport participation makes people too muscular, and that sport excludes specific groups, whereas those who are married or in common law relationships are more likely to agree only a little or not at all with this. Further, widowed, divorced, or separated Canadians are significantly less likely than others to agree a little or not at all that sport is too competitive; as well, they are more likely than those who have never married to strongly agree that sport is too structured.

Activity level Active Canadians are generally more likely to hold positive beliefs about the benefits of regularly participating in sport. Active Canadians are more likely than inactive Canadians to agree strongly that regular sport participation helps people to relax, to reduce stress, and to feel good about themselves. Active adults are less likely than those who are sedentary to agree a little or not at all that sport participation helps people to socialize, and that sport promotes a sense of belonging.

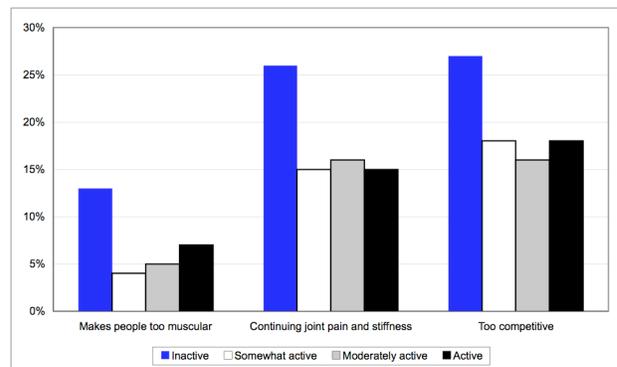
FIGURE 12: POSITIVE BELIEFS BY ACTIVITY LEVEL
% who strongly agree



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There are also differences related to activity level and negative beliefs. Specifically, inactive Canadians are more likely than those who are active to strongly agree that participation makes people too muscular and leads to continued joint pain and stiffness. Further, sedentary Canadians are more likely than active Canadians to strongly agree that sport is too competitive. Active Canadians are significantly less likely than inactive Canadians to agree only a little or not at all that sport participation leads to new injuries.

FIGURE 13: NEGATIVE BELIEFS BY ACTIVITY LEVEL
% who strongly agree



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Recommendations for action The Social Cognitive Theory is based on the idea that behaviour, cognition, and environment interact as determinants of each other. One aspect is based on beliefs and expectations that certain behaviours will lead to particular outcomes. Some research suggests that expectations of outcome maybe be an even better predictor of physical activity than self-efficacy.¹ Therefore, this bulletin examined the expected positive and negative beliefs about outcomes associated with sport participation and found that the majority of Canadians generally hold strong positive beliefs about the benefits of sport participation. Indeed, relatively few hold strong negative beliefs. In addition to being cognizant of the negative beliefs cited in this bulletin, perceived barriers (i.e., time, fatigue, etc.) also need to be considered when promoting sport participation as perceived negative outcomes and barriers to

sport participation may outweigh perceived positive outcome expectations related to an individual's perceived control and choice to engage in sport regularly. As such, policy-makers can:

- * Understand if certain negative beliefs or perceived barriers are more predictive of participation than others. Further, understanding whether the costs of negative outcomes outweigh positive expectations is important in determining whether increased awareness of positive outcomes or increased education on how to avoid or reduce negative outcomes is required for certain groups. Indeed, those who do not participate in sport or who are inactive are more likely to cite negative beliefs about participation. Research has suggested that lifestyle interventions or ways of incorporating activity into daily life may be beneficial for reducing perceptions of costs.¹ This may be a first step for these individuals in encouraging them to be more active and then educating them on how to pick appropriate sports that suit their needs.
- * Reinforce short term and long term benefits of sport and physical activity participation. Research shows that the “proximity” of outcomes is important when encouraging active behaviours.¹ For example, the potential benefit of reducing one's functional limitations may be perceived as more salient to older adults than to younger adults, whereas such benefits as meeting others with similar values and socializing may be viewed as proximal outcomes for both groups. Emphasizing that there are important benefits than can be garnered relatively quickly may help to increase participation rates.
- * Educate the public on how to participate in sport safely to reduce negative perceptions. Indeed, this bulletin reveals that older adults are more likely to state that sport participation

leads to joint pain or stiffness. Tailoring an intervention for older adults that considers their specific needs and motivators may potentially help to increase participation.² Ensuring that older adults adopt an appropriate exercise regime and receive proper training and instruction can help ensure safety in this group. It would be prudent to suggest lower impact activities with little potential for injury, while emphasizing proper stretching and safe alternatives for those unaccustomed to vigorous activity, particularly older adults. In addition, it is important to recommend proper equipment, protective clothing, and appropriate safety procedures as a means of avoiding injuries.

- * Understand what beliefs are associated with participation in physical activity and sport to promote programs. For example, people who are more active view fun as a key ingredient in sport. This element needs to be emphasized in designing and promoting programs. Similarly, promoting the benefits of participation in sport to reduce stress, feel energized, feel good about oneself, and gain a sense of belonging may help to attract people to programs. To understand the needs of current non-participants, it is important to evaluate existing programs to determine if they are viewed as too competitive, exclusive, or structured, and identify adaptations to overcome these issues so that they are appealing to a broader range of individuals.

References

- ¹ William, D.M., Anderson, E.S., & Winett, R.A. (2005). A review of the outcome expectancy construct in physical activity research. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 29(1), pp. 70-79.
- ² Netz, Y., Raviv, S. (2004). Age differences in motivational orientation towards physical activity: An application of social-cognitive theory: An application of social-cognitive theory. *The Journal of Psychology*, 138(1), pp. 35-48.

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