Policy and program considerations for increasing sport participation among members of underrepresented groups in Canada. 2nd Edition

Presented to Sport Canada

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Executive Summary

Sport should be available and responsive to the needs of all Canadian residents who want to participate. Sport participation benefits individuals and society overall through improved physical, psychological and social well-being, increased civic pride, engagement and cohesion, and increased economic development and prosperity. However, some women and girls, Indigenous people, persons with a disability, recent immigrants, new Canadians, socio-economically disadvantaged Canadians, older adults, members of the LGBTQ2IA+ community, and Canadians living in rural, remote and isolated regions do not participate at the same rates as their mainstream counterparts. Inclusive policies and programming benefit all who may feel excluded from sport.

This report provides the results of a literature review intended to serve as a common evidence-base for collaborative policy and program development work aimed at increasing participation in sport, particularly among members of underrepresented groups. This second edition is an update of the original 2016 report and includes additional findings from literature published in the three subsequent years.

The first section of this report presents participation rates and barriers to participation by each of the target groups, while the second section presents evidence for addressing barriers and increasing sport participation. Practical ideas for action are presented in supplements entitled *Evidence-Based Ideas for Action to Increase Sport Participation Among Members of Underrepresented Groups*. These supplements are created for policy makers, national and provincial/ territorial sport and recreation organizations and local sport providers, coaches, leaders and teachers.

Sport is about more than training and performance, and participation is about more than just the number of participants who show up to a program. Sport participation includes experiential aspects related to inclusion and community integration including mastery, challenge, autonomy (choice), engagement, meaning and belongingness. The bulk of the evidence for increasing participation in sport is organized in the report by these aspects, followed by considerations for policy, training, dissemination and evaluation.

The concepts of sport, recreation and physical activity are not exclusive of one another. Strategies to increase participation in physical activity or include members of marginalized groups in recreation both in the community and in schools are often applicable to increasing sport participation of the same groups. Relevant strategies from these related sectors have been included.

Developing physical literacy and cultural capital at any age

While the Canadian Sport Policy focuses on early physical literacy and sport skill development, members of underrepresented groups may not have had these opportunities at a young age, due to socio-economic disadvantage, physical or health limitations,

residency in other countries, cultural norms or marginalization due to other reasons. The lack of physical literacy development at a young age creates a significant barrier to entry into sport. People may feel awkward, as they do not have the basic skills, and they may be excluded from teams who are focused on winning.

However, having physical literacy levels below those of one's peers is only part of the sport shortfalls that exclude some Canadian residents. Consistent early participation creates cultural capital (abilities, values and desires celebrated in a sport). Without early sport opportunities, potential participants may not be familiar with the rules or strategies, feel they don't fit in with the culture of the team or that a sport is not for them.

While members of the underrepresented groups discussed in this report are diverse, both between groups and internally, their barriers and challenges to participation in sport are similar. In addition to lacking sufficient physical literacy and cultural capital, barriers can include fear of judgement and the attitudes of others; lack of relevant role models; lack of access to relevant, appropriate or enjoyable programming; lack of facilities, equipment, transportation, or information; and economic and time constraints. The solutions, while requiring tailoring to each group, fall into the same general categories.

Identify and customise the right combination of solutions
No single action will increase sport participation alone. For example, offering

subsidies without providing a welcoming environment will not entice people to come or to stay. A holistic approach to increasing sport participation is needed. This involves addressing the whole person, including emphasizing the health benefits of sport; involving community members in suggesting and designing solutions; supporting and promoting participation; and building linkages with community partners, both by involving them in promoting sport offerings and by including sport in their broader programming. It is imperative that policy makers and practitioners work with members of each target group they are hoping to serve, to gain an understanding of the group's culture, challenges, sport inclusion needs and preferred solutions, and then tailoring a critical mass of context specific solutions.

Honouring reasons for participation
To encourage participation at all levels, there is a need for sport leaders and organizations to support the delivery of fun, socially inclusive sport programs that support a healthy active lifestyle for all Canadian residents. It is important to understand, acknowledge and honour reasons for participating in a sport and not to enforce athletic development standards on those who are not looking for that type of experience. Accommodating all levels of skill and competition and supporting choice of participation level provides the variety of experiences sought by different individuals.

Ideas for Action
To improve sport participation among Canadians and particularly among members

of underrepresented populations, stakeholders could consider:

- Developing programs to introduce basic skills and improve physical literacy for all ages, abilities and skill levels;
- Creating a welcoming environment and ensuring that experiences are positive, encouraging, safe and fun;
- Offering a variety of types, levels and modifications of sport programming to meet the interests and needs of a broad range of potential participants;
- Celebrating diversity and ensuring that sport participation experiences are inclusive, non-judgemental, and free of harassment and inappropriate language;
- Honouring and supporting the choices regarding type and level of involvement, competition and scheduling;
- Increasing access to sport by opening many types of buildings and facilities, ensuring physical and operational access;
- Ensuring facilities are maintained, accessible and meet the privacy and cultural needs of participants;
- Working with intersectoral and community partners and participants to ensure that programming meets the needs of the community and that promotion efforts are accessible and relevant;
- Providing professional development and mentorship opportunities to coaches, leaders and administrators;
- Encouraging peer leadership and mentorship;
- Removing transportation, equipment, registration and other access barriers;

- Encouraging support networks and social interaction, and prioritizing fun;
- Attracting participants through the provision of broader social and cultural experiences in addition to the sporting experience;
- Ensuring equity in media representation of a diversity of Canadians that avoids stereotypes;
- Celebrating and promoting diversity and working from a mindset of inclusion; and
- Ensuring policy supports these goals.

Next Steps

The contents of this report and the accompanying supplements can be used as a basis for consultation with multiple sectors to gather feedback to build upon the foundation laid. Furthermore, there is a need to gather information about the types of policies and programs underway across the country and for monitoring the participation rates of members of target groups over time. This information, along with that of existing reports on serving underrepresented groups, needs to be actively shared and promoted. Now is the time to find ways to promote identified approaches broadly and support their implementation. Finally, efforts should be evaluated and monitored to gauge their impact, identify ways to improve, identify promising practices and continue to share what works with programmers and policy makers across the nation.

Contents

Introduction

Sport should be available and responsive to the needs of all Canadians who want to participate. Sport participation benefits individuals and society overall through improved physical, psychological and social well-being, increased civic pride, engagement and cohesion, and increased economic development and prosperity.[1,2] However, members of a number of groups do not participate at the same rates as their mainstream counterparts. Some women and girls, Indigenous peoples, persons with a disability, recent immigrants, new Canadians, socio-economically disadvantaged Canadians, older adults, members of the LGBTQ2IA+ community, and Canadians living in rural, remote and isolated regions face significant additional systemic and social challenges to sport participation.[3] As a result, not only do they miss out on the benefits of sport participation, but they also may experience additional social stressors,[4] all of which lead to lower levels of participation.

Through its general values such as fair play, non-discrimination and teamwork,[64] sport can provide opportunities for social interaction and civic engagement, assisting integration into a new country,[5] empowerment and building self-esteem, experience and skill building, all of which can be transferable to other social contexts, such as schools, workplaces and communities.[6,64]

Policy Environment

Several key Canadian documents, like many sport policies from around the world, have emphasized the importance of creating conditions that embrace sport participation for members of underrepresented groups:

- The *Canadian Sport Policy 2012 (CSP)*[2] embraces inclusion and accessibility as one of its seven policy values and its policy principles, along with clear direction that sport should play a bigger role as a driver for personal and social development. Its framework emphasizes sport participation which is inclusive of levels and participation contexts (introduction to sport, recreational sport, competitive sport and high-performance sport), diversity of participants, interests and abilities, and recognizes the role of sport as a tool for social and economic development. As part of the commitment to the CSP, the federal, provincial/territorial governments are committed to ensuring inclusion of traditionally underrepresented or marginalized groups in sport.

- *A Common Vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living: Let's Get Moving*[7] identifies four Areas of Focus, all of which recommend policies, programs and communications efforts directed at populations "with the greatest needs and access issues."[(p.17-20)]

- *A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015, Pathway to Wellbeing[8]* describes best practices[*] for increasing participation and highlights the importance of engaging less active members of the community. A *Framework for Recreation* describes five goals and priorities for action under each goal. The second goal, *Inclusion and Access,* focuses on increasing "inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation."[(pg. 22)] Eight priority actions address gender, women and girls, culture, Indigenous people, people who are economically disadvantaged, ethno-culturally diverse populations, older adults, people in rural and remote communities, and those with a disability.

While each strategy (and sector) has distinct responsibilities, there are a number of areas of overlap. Efforts have been made to align the three strategies.[7]

A number of policy documents have focused on sport participation for members of Canada's Indigenous communities. The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action,*[9] include five calls that refer to sport (see side bar). The *Canadian Sport Policy* and the *Framework for Recreation in Canada* emphasize the need to support Indigenous peoples' participation in sport

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Sport Related Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

87. Tell stories of Aboriginal athletes
87. We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.
88.Aboriginal Long-Term Participant Development Pathway leading to a vibrant well funded NAIG
88. We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.
89. Amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act to reduce barriers and increase # of HP athletes
89. We call upon the federal government to amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sports participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples.
90.National sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive
90. We call upon the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples, including, but not limited to, establishing:
  i. In collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal peoples.
  ii. An elite athlete development program for Aboriginal athletes.
  iii. Programs for coaches, trainers, and sports officials that are culturally relevant for Aboriginal peoples. –
  iv. Anti-racism awareness and training programs.
91. Indigenous peoples are engaged and the territorial protocols are respected
91. We call upon the officials and host countries of international sporting events such as the Olympics, Pan Am, and Commonwealth games to ensure that Indigenous peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of planning and participating in such events.

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[*] The term *best practices* is commonly used to describe practices that have been identified as successful in achieving their goals. It does not imply that there are other practices in use that are less valid.

and recreation.[16] Sport Canada's 2005 *Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport*[10] set goals of enhanced participation, excellence, capacity, and interaction for Indigenous peoples in sport. These should be used to inform activities involving Indigenous sport participants.

The *Canadian Policy on Sport for Persons with a Disability* promotes full and active participation in Canadian sport at all levels and in all forms, to the extent of the abilities and interests of persons with a disability.[11]

Around the world, other countries have highlighted the need for inclusivity and accessibility in their sport policies:

- Sport England[12] noted a commitment to "Putting customers at the heart of what we do, responding to how they organise their lives and helping the sector to be more welcoming and inclusive, especially of those groups currently under-represented in sport"[(pg. 8)] and to "prioritise demographic groups who are currently under-represented in terms of their engagement with sport and physical activity."[(pg. 10)]

- The Australian Sports Commission[13] declared sport a 'consumer-driven industry' and committed to ensuring that sport offers what its citizens want. Target groups include women, Indigenous Australians, persons with a disability, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The Australian strategy focuses on building capacity of National Sport Organizations to grow

their sport's participation base particularly with these groups.

- A report prepared for Sport New Zealand[14] identifies older adults, young people, deprived populations, ethnically diverse populations (including Maori and Pacific Islanders), individuals with a disability, and those living outside of urban areas as populations to focus additional efforts. It also notes the need for recognizing sport as a consumer driven choice.

Globally, the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee have also addressed inclusion:

- While, sport for development contributes to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals of health promotion, promoting equity of girls and women, and ensuring inclusion within a number of goals, the goals themselves speak to the right to inclusion across all aspects of life, including sport.[15]

- The United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples'* Article 31 specifically addresses Indigenous peoples' rights to control and protect their sports and traditional games.[16]

- The United Nations and the World Health Organization[17] have both declared leisure time physical activity for persons with a disability as a human right and providing opportunities as a fundamental service.

- The International Olympic Committee and the European Union have been

working toward gender equality in sport, in terms of participation, leadership development and appointments, and advocacy and awareness campaigns.[5,18]

Canadian Provinces, Territories, Municipalities, National Sport Organizations (NSOs) and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) have emphasized the need for policy and program focus on inclusion. For example:

- Nova Scotia[19] aims to target increased participation in underrepresented segments of the population, specifically, women, Indigenous people, people with a disability and those who are financially disadvantaged, and to remove barriers to participation for those who experience physical and developmental challenges.

- Ontario's *Game ON Strategic Plan* for Sports[20] includes a focus on increasing participation among women and girls, children in low-income families, people with a disability, older adults, Aboriginal people, LBGTQ Ontarians, and newcomers to Canada.

- BC has a number of documents that address sport and physical activity participation. The *B.C. Sport Strategy*[21] was developed in response to the Canadian Sport Policy. It focuses on sport participation, sport hosting, sport excellence, and sport funding. Sport participation investments target all British Columbians, but overtly targets girls, youth not involved in sport, persons with a disability, those in low-income circumstances, and members of

Indigenous populations. *The Aboriginal Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity Strategy*[22] aims to make sport, recreation and physical activity a priority to help improve the health of Indigenous communities, families and individuals across British Columbia. The *BC Physical Activity Strategy*[23] is intended to guide and stimulate coordinated policies, practices and programs in physical activity that will improve the health and well-being of British Columbians. One of the key lenses through which the Strategy focuses is that of inclusion.

- Via Sport[24] was created "to transform and scale the impact of sport," to work towards it's vision of "a society where people and communities are truly healthy, vibrant and connected because they value and participate in sport experiences that are safe, inclusive and meaningful." Via Sport provides resources to support inclusion in sport.

- The vision of Active Alberta[25] is one where "Albertans enjoy a high quality of life, improved health and wellness, strong communities, economic benefits and personal fulfillment, through recreation, active living and sport."[(p.1)] One of the guiding principles focuses on accessibility and inclusion.

- Québec en Forme[26] is an initiative that strives to increase physical activity (and healthy eating) by supporting communities and organizations throughout Quebec that encourage young people, particularly from

disadvantaged backgrounds, to become more active.

- Skate Ontario names inclusiveness as one of its core values.[27]

- CAAWS,[28] the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity provides expertise and has created resources for the sport and physical activity community. These resources outline policy and program ideas for the inclusion of girls and women as participants and leaders across the life span with specific pieces on newcomers, Indigenous peoples, older women, low socio-economic status mothers, and members of the LGBTQ2IA+ community.

- The Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability[29] provides tools, resources and support to communities and organizations which seek to be inclusive. It has developed a *Blueprint for Action* which provides policy and program recommendations for successful engagement for individuals with a disability.

- Swimming Canada[30] promotes itself as an organization that welcomes full participation of all individuals in its programs and activities, irrespective of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, or disability. The organization encourages participation in the sport of swimming and strives to

ensure that equity, diversity and inclusion are key considerations when developing, updating or delivering its policies and programs.

While these are but a few examples from the international and domestic sector, practitioners at many levels and from various types of organizations struggle with practical implementation of the principles and practice of inclusion, particularly at the grassroots level.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Canadian sport, physical activity and recreation sectors with the results of a literature review to serve as a common evidence-base for collaborative policy and program development work, and practical ideas for action aimed at increasing participation in sport, particularly among members of underrepresented groups. This report, originally published in 2016, details the results of an overview of current Canadian and international knowledge that examines these issues. This second edition provides an update and includes additional findings from literature published in the three subsequent years.

Project Methodology

The review was based on the evidence-informed public health decision making process by the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools.[31] This process includes seven stages (define, search, appraise, synthesize, adapt, implement, and evaluate). For this project the authors used the first four stages.

The literature search for the first edition of this report (undertaken in 2016) was generally limited to literature published within the previous seven years, although some earlier seminal articles were also included. This second (2019) edition includes literature from the subsequent three years and expanded the scope of the search terms slightly to include a broader definition of sport. It did not carry the more broadly defined search back further, as it was felt that the broader search tended to identify physical activity interventions and other research beyond the intended sport focus.

The process looked for academic and gray literature on Canadian, international and inter-jurisdictional public policy considerations related to increasing sport participation. Academic literature is that which is published in peer-reviewed journals. Grey literature is information produced outside of traditional publishing and distribution channels, and can include reports, working papers, newsletters, government documents, speeches, white papers, urban plans, and the like.[32] The

search terms were developed jointly with the Work Group (See box, next page).

Articles were included in the review if the full-text was available, if the language of publication was English or French, if they were relevant to the Canadian policy context, and if they referred to supporting or increasing sport (or in relevant cases, recreation or physical activity) participation for one of the identified groups. Articles were excluded if they were not directly relevant to policy decision making around sport participation, or pertained only to competitive, elite or high-performance sport. Articles that only referred to coaching or sport administration were generally excluded.

The time frame for undertaking this project and its potential scope excluded an exhaustive examination of all possible sources. This search, therefore, took a rapid review approach. Once the search started yielding significant repetition, it was determined that the major trends in the thinking on the subject had been identified, and the search was concluded. While the net was cast widely, there are certainly articles and policy documents that were not included. Any omissions are unintentional and are not a reflection of the quality of the documents.

The combined initial search for the first and second edition of this report identified over 500 articles. The identified articles were then screened based first on their title, then on the abstract or executive summary to select the ones relevant for further review.

Obtained articles were reviewed for both content relevant to the project and quality of the information. Source credibility was verified, and all documents were reviewed with a critical appraisal lens. Table 1 provides a description of the number of articles that were selected to inform this report.

An annotated list of references with the bibliographic information, target population, country of origin and relevant content of each article was created and provided to Sport Canada for use as an internal resource.

Search Terms

TITLE: sport* OR game* OR play OR recreat* OR athlet* OR "physical-education" OR "physical-activity" OR "physical-activities" OR fitness OR exercise* OR workout* OR "working-out" OR "physically-active" OR "physical-literacy" OR "fundamental-movement-skill" OR "active-living" OR active
AND
TITLE: women* OR woman* OR female* OR girl OR girls OR indigenous* OR aborigin* OR native* OR "first-nation" OR "first-nations" OR metis OR maori OR inuit OR inui OR "native-american" OR "native-americans" OR disabil* OR disable* OR paralymp* OR "special-olympics" OR "special-olympian" OR "special-olympians" OR parasport* OR impairment* OR deaf* OR blind* OR "mental-health" OR "mental-illness" OR "mental-disease" OR "mental-disorder" OR immigrant* OR refugee OR "new-canadian" OR "new-canadians" OR ethnic* OR ethno* OR culture OR cultures OR cultural* OR race OR racial OR lgbtq OR gay OR gays OR lesbian* OR homosexual* OR transgender* OR queer* OR "two-spirited" OR bisexual* OR "sexual-identity" OR gender* OR "non-binery" OR pangender* OR intersex* OR "older-adult" OR "older-adults" OR retiree* OR senior* OR mature OR aging OR aged OR ageing OR socioeconomic* OR disparit* OR poverty* OR poor OR remote OR northern* OR northwest* OR yukon* OR nunavet* OR location* OR geograph* OR rural* OR discriminat* OR racism* OR marginaliz* OR marginalis* OR vulnerab* OR homophobia* OR underrepresent* OR "under-represented" OR stereotype* OR "weight-bias" OR "low-income" OR "social-determinants-of-health" OR "age-friendly" OR "family-friendly" OR "social-isolation" OR "socially-isolated" OR "health-differential"
 AND
TITLE: increase* OR participat* OR access* OR equit* OR equal* OR inequit* OR disparit* OR inequalit* OR involve* OR inclusion* OR include* OR opportunit* OR inclusiv* OR Strategy*OR practice* OR interven* OR system* OR approach* OR policy OR policies OR program* OR action* OR framework* OR paradigm* OR infrastructure* OR coach* OR facilit* OR leader* OR centre* OR center* OR park OR parks OR "physical-space" OR equipment* OR trail* OR playground* OR barrier* OR facilitator* OR barrier* OR facilitator* OR determinant* OR strateg* OR effective* OR enabl* OR success*
 AND
 canada* OR canadian* OR "united-states" OR europ* OR australia* OR "new-zealand" OR "united-kingdom" OR england OR "developed-countries" OR "western-countries" OR "british-columbia" OR alberta* OR manitoba* OR saskatchewan* OR ontari* OR quebec* OR "new-brunswick" OR "nova-scotia" OR "prince-edward-island" OR pei OR newfoundland* OR vancouver* OR calgar* OR edmonton* OR winnipeg* OR saskatoon* OR toronto* OR montreal* OR halifax*
 Databases Searched: PubMed, Sportdiscus, CINAHL, PsycINFO, ERIC, ABI Inform, Canadian Business & Current Affairs, Canadian Research Index, PAIS and Sociological Abstracts

Table 1: Number of Articles Included for Review by Population

	Academic Articles		Grey Literature	
	2016[*]	2019[†]	2016[*]	2019[†]
Indigenous	18	9	10	1
Older Adults	4	13	8	0
Low S.E.S.	13	3	5	0
Immigrants/New Canadians	12	4	4	2
Persons with a disability	30	27	10	5
Women/girls	34	21	11	10
LGBTQ2IA+	13	5	2	4
Rural	2	5	4	4
Other	3	4	6	2
Total number of articles	89	82	50	23

[*] Published in the previous seven years

[†] Published since the previous review.

Context

This section presents some of the key definitions, concepts and overview of the Canadian policy landscape as background to the sections that follow.

Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity

There has long been debate about the definitions, similarities and distinctiveness of the sport, recreation and physical activity sectors. For example, is physical activity the umbrella under which sport and recreation fall, given that physical recreational pursuits and sport participation are ultimately all defined as being physically active, with the inherent benefits? Or is recreation the more expansive concept given that its mandate encompasses not only pursuits that are physical in nature, but also those that are social, intellectual, creative and spiritual?[8] In Europe, the term "sport" means "all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels."[33] This concept encompasses not only the traditional meaning of sport, but also various forms of physical activity including spontaneous, unorganized games and regular physical activity or exercise, all of which benefit individuals and society.[34]

For Indigenous people, sport is not differentiated from recreation and physical activity. Sport may be defined by some in terms of its positive holistic benefits and its capacity to meet their emotional, spiritual, mental and physical needs. Sport is rooted in cultures, traditions, and connections to the land.[16,35,36,37] Traditional games provide a foundation for physical activity and movement which instills, not only competence, but confidence and opportunities to learn culture and cultural ways of knowing and moving through the world.[159]

If, as in mainstream Canada, we maintain distinct definitions for each of the sectors, it is accurate to say that while each sector makes a unique contribution to the Canadian landscape (for example, the sport sector's mandate of developing and supporting elite athletes through high performance coaching and competition), it is also true that all three sectors have a common mandate to "enhance the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment."[8(p. 160)] From a participant and data collection point of view, the boundaries between recreation, physical activity and sport are blurry. For example, swimmers may do laps for fitness or may be training for competition; "beer league" sports may be undertaken more for their social aspects than for their competitive or inherent sport value and yet, participants are counted as partaking in sport. While, the physical and other benefits are similar for the individual, data around participation rates do not account for these differences and they are all considered swimmers, baseball players, hockey players and overall sport participants.

Canadian Sport Participation Rates

When it comes to gauging the level of sport participation among Canadians overall and among sub-populations, various definitions have been used. The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's (CFLRI) *Physical Activity and Sport Monitor* (PAM) defines sport broadly as physical activities that usually involve competition, rules and the development of specific skills, and asks survey respondents if they participated in sport in the 12 months prior to being surveyed.

Statistics Canada's *General Social Survey* (GSS) asks respondents if they regularly participated in sport during the previous 12 months and defined "regularly" to mean that the respondent participated in a sport at least once a week during the season or for a certain period of the year. A sport is defined as an activity that involves two or more participants engaged for the purpose of competition. In this definition, sport involves formal rules and procedures, requires tactics and strategies, specialized neuromuscular skills, and a high degree of difficulty and effort. The competitive nature of sport implies the development of trained coaching personnel. It does not include activities in which the performance of a motorized vehicle is the primary determinant of the competitive outcome. A number of physical and leisure activities are excluded, such as non-competitive aerobics, aqua-fitness, bicycling for recreation/transportation only, body building/sculpting, car racing, dancing,

fishing, fitness classes, hiking, jogging, lifting weights (non-competitive), motorcycling, snowmobiling, and non-competitive walking.

Neither survey has collected data across all groups of interest. While the GSS definition is stricter than the PAM's, it includes a broader age group (PAM includes Canadians 18 and older, while the GSS collects data from Canadians aged 15 and older). In addition, the data are collected in different time periods. While the two rates are not comparable in terms of absolute participation rates, the trends they demonstrate regarding disparities in participation among underrepresented populations, when compared to Canadians overall, are similar.

The PAM indicated that approximately one quarter (25%) of Canadians aged 18 and older report participating in sport in 2016-18.[38] This rate is lower than the one third (34%) who reported participation in 2014-15.[39] Frequency and regularity of participation among adults differ by age and gender but not by education or income status. Among children and youth (aged 5-17 years), 74% reported participation in sport in 2010-11.[40] The GSS reported that 27% of Canadians aged 15 and older participated in sport in 2016.[41]

Key Definitions and Concepts

For the purposes of this report, the following sport related definitions are used:

- **Physical activity** is any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure. It is an overall term for any movement of the body.[42]

- **Sport** is a game, competition, or similar activity, done for enjoyment or as a job, that takes physical effort and skill, and is played or done by following particular rules.[43]

- **Recreation** is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.[7]

- **Physical literacy** is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.[44]

Inclusion

Everyone has the right to be involved, and sport bodies should represent, value and honour the diverse nature of society and their membership.[45,46] Inclusive sport ensures that *everyone* is treated equally and fairly, has access to sport in a manner that is relevant and appropriate to them, and where they feel engaged, welcomed and provided with practical opportunities to be active participants and contributors.[6,47,48,49,50] Inclusion demands a minimum of tolerance, sensibility and openness from all parties,[6] tasks coaches, parents, and other athletic personnel to understand diversity and inclusivity to support all athletes,[4] embrace difference, and value the contributions of all sport participants regardless of their characteristics or backgrounds.[51]

Intersectionality

Some Canadians fit more than one group, for example an Indigenous woman, a new Canadian who has a disability or a trans older adult living with limited economic means. When addressing the needs of any group, it is important to acknowledge that some members have the characteristics of one or more additional groups at the same time. Individuals sharing a common identity may differ importantly in terms of ethnicity, gender, language, age, religion, gender identity, sexual identity, generation, migration history, socio-economic background, and many other sociodemographic and individual variables. The interaction of these play a significant

and complex role in sport participation.[52,53,253] An important factor in inclusion and engaging participants is understanding the multiple intersecting and overlapping identities that may contribute to their feelings of exclusion from sport.[119]

Benefits of Diversity

Diversity should be reflected, not only among sport participants, but also among coaches, leaders, staff, and board members. Organizations that position themselves as inclusive can benefit from attracting a greater number of members and volunteers from a more diverse pool; increased pathway and participation opportunities; enhanced branding, reputation and public support; increased sponsorship opportunities; better governance and risk management; improved capacity to meet the goals of strategic plans and regulatory requirements; and increased connectivity and diversity of the sports community.[5,45] For example, the presence of women on boards has been shown to contribute positively to the quality of the services delivered, through the provision of different role models and approaches that will encourage girls and boys, and through the contribution to the establishment of a safe and secure sport environment for all genders by raising awareness of risks and harm to athletes.[18,5]

Role of physical literacy for all types of sport activities

Two common themes in the literature that describe the barriers to sport participation in the populations of interest are lack of skills and confidence. Both of these elements are fundamental to developing physical literacy. Physical literacy is a unique and lifelong journey,[44] and although it is the entry point in the Long-term Athlete Development Model (LTAD),[54] there is a need to expand beyond focusing on children between the ages of zero to six and examine ways to teach, build and foster physical literacy at any time of life.

While this is important for all Canadians, it is critical for members of underrepresented groups, whether their aspirations are to pursue competition at an elite level, to enjoy the social and fun aspects of sport, or to be active for life.[159] Some models of the LTAD, particularly those describing the sport experiences of individuals with a disability, include additional stages of Awareness and First Involvement. These stages are likely

relevant to all Canadian residents, including members of underrepresented groups, who did not have the opportunity to develop fundamental physical literacy skills at an early age.

However, physical competence and confidence are not the only elements of physical literacy that are important for members of underrepresented groups. Many of the elements are interrelated. For example, engagement in physical activities for life "refers to an individual taking personal responsibility for physical literacy by freely choosing to be active on a regular basis. This involves prioritizing and sustaining involvement in a range of meaningful and personally challenging activities, as an integral part of one's

lifestyle."[44(pg.2)] When barriers to participation exist and those who would like to participate feel excluded, the personal responsibility aspect is thwarted. This then requires policy makers and other stakeholders to address the environmental and policy barriers that members of underrepresented groups face, so that they may have those opportunities to gain skills, build confidence and take personal responsibility for physical literacy. Finally, one of the core concepts of physical literacy is that it is an inclusive concept and accessible to all. For this, as well as the other concepts discussed above, physical literacy is an important factor in increasing participation in sport, physical activity and recreation.
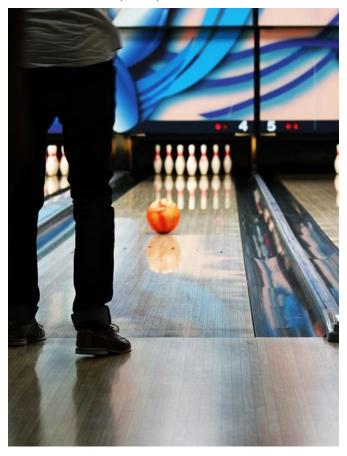
Participation Rates and Barriers to Sport Participation

When it comes to sport participation in Canada, women and girls, Indigenous peoples, persons with a disability, newcomers[*] to Canada, socio-economically disadvantaged Canadians, older adults, members of the LGBTQ2IA+ community, and Canadians living in rural, remote and isolated regions participate at lower rates than Canadians as a whole. This section describes each of these populations in terms of the unique barriers, challenges and needs with respect to sport participation.

In reviewing the single-identity sections below, it is important to keep in mind the intersectionality of members of each of these groups. There may also be members of other groups who experience marginalization when it comes to sport participation that may not have been identified in the literature. However, many of the barriers and challenges may be the same as those experienced by the groups discussed. Broadly applying the principles of inclusion will help to ensure that all Canadians, regardless of identity or group affiliation, feel more comfortable participating in sport.

A social-ecological model, depicted in Figure 2, below, illustrates the complex and multidimensional factors that facilitate and constrain sport, physical activity and recreation decisions, and behaviour. It demonstrates how individuals influence and are influenced by those around them and depicts the relationship between behaviours and individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and social systems. The social-ecological model shifts policy focus from single issues, risk factors and linear causality to a more holistic way of examining the contexts in which people live and interact.[55,56] This report examines interventions and practices that have the potential to encourage sport participation from multiple layers of influence.

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[*] A newcomer is an immigrant or refugee who has been in Canada for a short time. For the purposes of simplicity, recent immigrants, refugees and new Canadians will be referred to as newcomers throughout the report.

Figure 1: Socioecological Model of Sport Decisions and Behaviour

Structures, policies, systems

Community

Institutions/Organizations/Schools

Intrapersonal

Individual

Local, provincial/territorial, federal policies and laws to regulate and support sport participation and healthy actions

Social networks, norms and standards

Rules, regulations, policies and informal structures

Family, peers, social networks and associations

Knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours

Women and Girls

Participation Rates

Canadian females consistently participate in sport at lower rates than males, across all demographic categories. The 2014-15 PAM reported that about one-quarter (22%) of women and almost half of men (46%) participated in sport, and women participated in sport for fewer months of the year than do men.[57] The 2016-18 PAM reported that participation in sport remained lower among women than among men.[58] In 2016, the GSS[41] reported that 20% of women and 34% of men participated in sport. The rate of participation among women rose from the 2010 rate of 16%, while the participation rate among men only rose by one percent over the same

time period. This increase of women's participation occurred in all age groups, but especially among the 15-24 year old age group (a 9% increase). An increase of 4% was seen in the 25-34 and 35-54 age groups.

Among children, the PAM[40] reported that fewer girls (70%) than boys (79%) participated in sport in 2013. The 2010 GSS reported that, among children aged 5 to 14, girls (45%) were less likely to participate in sport than boys (56%) of the same age.[113] Among those who participate in school sports, the 2011 Active Healthy Kids Report Card reported some evidence that the rate of girls' participation may be lower than that of boys.[59] Among Métis and off-reserve First Nations children aged 6-14[*] fewer girls than boys participate in sport.[60]

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[*] The study examined only this age group.

Evidence points to significant declines in sport participation in the transition to adolescence, with a sharper decline in girls' participation rates than boys at this stage of life.[61] By 10 years of age, if a girl has yet to participate in sports, there is only a 10% chance that she will be physically active as an adult.[62] Women and girls of low socioeconomic status, from ethnic communities,[63] and who are mothers, are further disadvantaged with respect to access to opportunities.

Traditionally, sport has been dominated by men, both in terms of participation and governance.[64] The underrepresentation of women extends from sport participation to coaching,[65,64] and the decision-making bodies of sporting institutions.[65,64] While the underrepresentation of women among coaches and other leaders is beyond the scope of this report, the lack of women in other parts of a sport organization reduces the visibility to girls and women of 'people like them' which affects their sport participation.[236]

The underrepresentation of women and girls' sports in media[64] also leads to a lack of visibility. One media study revealed that only 4% of sport television programming in Canada was focused on female sport, with another 11% dedicated to sport that included both males and females.[66]

Individual Level Barriers

Women and girls' participation in sport is challenged by the male domination of the sector,[67] the design of sports that favour the male body[68] and an overall lack of social acceptance of female sport. Women are perceived as less capable than men, and risk being perceived as masculine or perhaps a lesbian if they do not conform to male defined gender guidelines or if they succeed at masculine sports.[65,67] These perceptions are often reinforced by the media.[67] Further, socializing women into gender norms at a young age teaches females that they are soft, passive, and less capable than men in sports.[67] Such issues may deter women from sport participation if they are socialized to fear the scrutiny involved with being athletic, or the ordeal of not being taken seriously as an athlete.[67]

Girls typically report more barriers to physical activity participation than boys[69] and this is likely also true of sport. Girls are

often discouraged from participating when they feel they lack basic levels of physical literacy,[70,76] experience low self-esteem and poor body image,[71,76] feel self-conscious or uncomfortable playing or practicing in front of boys,[145,72] feel embarrassed, humiliated or made fun of in physical education classes,[72,73] and experience discomfort in co-ed classes where activities can get too competitive to a point where the game is no longer fun.[72]

Adolescent girls report dislike of the activities they are required to do or the curriculum content, 'boy-centred' physical education curriculum and games, lack of perceived value of sport, lack of choice, changing interests, and school priorities as barriers.[73,70,71] Girls in this age group have also reported difficulty maintaining a feminine image (e.g., sport participation can be viewed as aggressive, not pretty and sweaty) both during and after physical activity (e.g., when returning to class or other activities without an opportunity to shower),[74,73] and the unattractiveness of, or self-consciousness in, gym clothes (such as dress requirements for swimming).[72,73]

Older women (aged 55–70) face challenges related to their health status, obligations, interests and abilities.[75]

Women's participation as athletes, coaches, officials, and other leaders is often limited by lack of time, which is often attributed to their traditional gender roles such as responsibilities for child and elder care.[55,65,64,66,76]

Interpersonal Level Barriers

Interpersonal level barriers for girls and women include social pressure, and lack of social support, encouragement and positive role models.[50,66] These role models have been found to be lacking in both the media and in the availability of female coaches.[66]

Organizational and System Level Barriers

Gender equality in this area is hindered by the social constructions of femininity and masculinity.[65] Sport participation by girls and women is often limited to female-specific sports and opportunities, and there is limited access to coaching, training, equipment and facilities which embrace girls and women's specific abilities and skill levels.[55]

Women are more likely to experience barriers related to issues of safety, due to environmental concerns such as maintenance and lighting,[76] and the potential exposure to physical and/or verbal sexual harassment and assault.[64] In addition, a lack of childcare is also a

commonly reported barrier[64,76] as are the costs associated with participation such as those associated with equipment and transportation.[66,76]

Indigenous Peoples[*]

Participation Rates

Among Indigenous people, participation rates, barriers and facilitators to participation and cultural factors vary among Métis, First Nations and Inuit peoples. The 2006 *Aboriginal Peoples Survey* reported that a little more than two-thirds (69%) of Aboriginal children (66% of First Nations children living off-Reserve, 71% of Métis and 72% of Inuit children) participated in sports[†] at least once a week. These data are not comparable to the data for other Canadians reported by the PAM and GSS elsewhere in this report due to different collection methodologies and differences in cultural interpretation of sport.

Boys are more likely to take part than girls regardless of identity. Overall, older children tend to participate more than younger children.[75,77] A higher level of parental education, living in a two-parent household, living off-reserve, weekly contact with Elders, and involvement in additional extracurricular activities are

associated with higher levels of Indigenous children' sport participation.

Individual Level Barriers

Individual level barriers experienced by members of this population include feelings of disempowerment,[78] fear of judgment and shyness,[79] and the common barriers of time constraints due to family, lack of child care and work commitments, motivation, and physical limitations.[79]

Interpersonal Level Barriers

Racism and discrimination are experienced in sport and recreation among Indigenous people,[80,16,81] which can alienate participants through the resulting fear, anxiety and mistrust.[81] Similarly, participants have reported a lack of relevance or sensitivity to Indigenous cultures and traditions in sport programming.[82,81] A lack of role models has also been reported.[78]

Organizational and System Level Barriers

In the past, mainstream sport played a part in the cultural policies of colonizing governments to eliminate Indigenous culture and encourage Indigenous people to embrace mainstream values and cultural practices.[84] Policies such as the *Indian Act*, and the practices of residential schools and

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[*] Consistent with The Canadian Government usage, the term Indigenous includes Aboriginal (First Nations and Métis) Peoples and Inuit Peoples. However in quotes or proper titles, the terms are used as they are mentioned in the original

document. Please also note that the capitalized term Elders refers to Indigenous Elders.
[†] Children played sports (including taking lessons) at least once a week, as reported by the parent. Less frequent involvement was classified as non-participation.

institutional authorities, promoted Euro-Canadian sports and games as the most appropriate forms of physical expression, and used sport and games to exert power and control over Indigenous peoples.[82] The legacy of colonialism has left its mark on sport participation by Indigenous people.

Cost is reported as a barrier among members of this population[78,79,16,81] and may be experienced at a higher rate than the mainstream Canadian population.[79] Expenses associated with sport participation (including registration fees, equipment and gear costs) were cited by Indigenous people as one of the main reasons for stopping or from starting in the first place.[79] A barrier unique to this population is related to the costs associated with participation in traditional Indigenous activities (e.g., procuring ammunition, travel to hunting sites).[78]

Transportation is also reported as a barrier[81,16] as is a lack of opportunities or access to facilities.[16,78,79] Participation in organized sports off-reserve has been reported as expensive and hard to get to.[83]

In recent years, Canadian Indigenous leaders have worked towards self-determination through sport, in particular through the North American Indigenous Games and the World Indigenous Games.[84] Recently, a greater level of resources has been dedicated to increase the percentage of Indigenous children who become physically literate, to create pathways for Indigenous athletes into

high performance sport, and to increase the rate of physical activity in this population.[85,86]

There is debate over government responsibility for financially supporting the delivery of sport programs both on-Reserve and off.[81] Jurisdictional issues are different for this population than any other Canadian population. For all other populations, recreation, physical activity and sport promotion are provincial and municipal responsibilities. For on-Reserve Indigenous populations, all activities fall under federal jurisdiction and for off-Reserve residents, jurisdictional responsibilities are very complex. This often means a lack of sports and recreation in on-Reserve settings and a debate over funding responsibility for urban Indigenous peoples' centres.[81,87] In addition, policies from different ministries may conflict and undermine each other or at the very least, do not benefit from horizontal cooperation on issues that cross a variety of departmental mandates.[81,87]

Access to appropriate government funding,[88,80] and the colonial legacy of government control over Indigenous peoples living on-Reserve often result in

intermittent community recreation programs with inconsistent staffing;[82,83] low levels of volunteerism; declining parental commitment; reliance on the local Band government to fund, organize, and staff community sports and recreation programs;[83] and programs that do not necessarily address the needs of each specific community.[82]

Persons with Disabilities

Participation Rates

Information about the incidence of disability in Canada as it relates to sport participation is difficult to ascertain, as the construct of disability in society is different from the technical rules defining eligibility to compete. In addition, Canadian surveys that have attempted to collect information about sport participation rates among persons with a disability have suffered from a lack of clarity around the definitions of sport participation and disability.[89] However, it has been acknowledged that sport participation rates among persons with a disability remain much lower than rates reported by their able-bodied counterparts.[90] People with psychological difficulties may also demonstrate lower levels of sport participation.[91] People most affected by the barriers are, in general, those with multiple physical disabilities and those with a higher disability grade.[92]

Some general physical activity participation data are available from other countries.

Data collected between 2009 and 2012 found that 21% of Americans with a physical disability reported achieving the recommended 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity compared with 54% of people without a disability.[93] Data collected in 2015-2016 via a British national survey found that 40% of adults without a disability reported at least one session per week of sport or exercise, compared to just 17% of adults with a disability.[94] Among Canadian children and youth, 3% of those with a disability participate in organized sport compared to 36% of able-bodied individuals, while 24% of young people with a disability never take part in unstructured activities, compared to just 2% of their able-bodied peers.[95]

Individual Level Barriers

Personal history and the severity of disability can have a significant impact on one's sport experience. Children born with a disability are often sheltered, discouraged from perceived physical risk and typically have fewer opportunities to develop fundamental movement and overall

physical literacy skills. Furthermore, those with a higher degree of disability may be assumed to be incapable of participating in sport. Additional individual level barriers have been reported as:
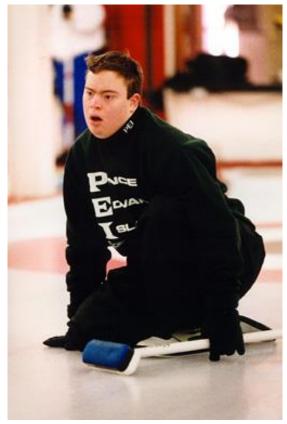
- negative self image,[96] a feeling of not being good enough, feeling self-conscious,[97] embarrassment,[96] lack of skills, and lack of confidence[104] or self-esteem;[97]

- negative mood, depression, or anxieties;[96]

- health symptoms and conditions,[96] such as pain or discomfort,[96,97] fatigue,[96,92] or a lack of energy[96] or strength;[96]

- lack of motivation or interest;[92,97] and

- a lack of knowledge of where to go or how to participate[98] or what sporting opportunities are available.[108]

Interpersonal Level Barriers

At the interpersonal level, other people's negative attitudes,[96] lack of parental support,[104] the inactivity of friends and family,[92] dependency on others,[97] discrimination,[104] stigma,[102] social isolation,[99] lack of acceptance by others, and people's misconception of an individual's physical condition or ability,[97] have been cited as impediments to participation. A further barrier for some children is the lack of parental capacity to teach them necessary skills or advocate on their behalf.[100]

Organizational and System Level Barriers

At a broader level, persons with a disability experience barriers that include the lack of physical access to facilities;[101,102] lack of specialized equipment;[97,108,245] lack of appropriate, adapted or accessible opportunities or programs;[98,92,97] and lack of accessible bathrooms and parking spaces.[102] Furthermore, staff or coaches may lack knowledge, training or qualifications[103,108] on topics such as ways to adapt sports for different types of ability, or how to offer specialized assistance.[104]

Like members of other underrepresented groups, cost[92,98] and transportation challenges[101,98,245] (for example, priority of paratransit services being assigned to doctor's appointments over recreational

activities in some cities) present barriers. Persons with a disability have also reported difficulty in obtaining information about opportunities in accessible formats[98] and about whether local physical facilities are accessible.[98]

Paralympic performance and pathways have improved over time[106] but these opportunities are available to a select few medically defined types of disabilities,[104,106] and only elite performers are included.[104] Outside of the Paralympic opportunities, there are issues with the provision of sport for persons with a disability at the grassroots level.[106] At some clubs or programs there is a focus on boosting the numbers of 'certain' types of athletes with a disability into their existing competitive pathways and systems rather than the provision of more choice for persons with a disability.[106]

Furthermore, barriers can arise from a perceived competency gap between the individual and the Paralympian, particularly among adults with a disability, which can impact personal motivation and create unrealistic expectations of a novice's abilities.[105] Historically embedded norms of ability and ableism; the perception that inclusion of disability within sport diminishes its legitimacy, rather than adding something of value within sport; the strong emphasis on competition and winning in sport; the lack of a culture of inclusion; and

the lack of understanding of disability limit organizational capacity to support the participation of persons with a disability in sport.[106,107,108]

Newcomers* to Canada

Sport can act as a critical mediator for achieving positive settlement and engaging meaningfully in society.[109] Canada, like many countries, views sport as a vehicle through which newcomers can learn about Canadian culture and meet other Canadians with similar interests, serving as a natural, "universal" connection point that may be more welcoming and better at integrating newcomers than many other social structures.[111] Sport involvement provides newcomers with opportunities to learn more of the informal aspects of Canadian culture such as slang terms, humour, acceptable behaviours and gestures, how to

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* Immigrants, new Canadians and refugees are collectively referred to as newcomers to simplify the text.

handle conflict in the Canadian context, and the opportunity to discuss Canadian politics and history.[111] Community centres serve not only as venues for sport and recreation programs, but as places where newcomers can meet other people in their community, thereby reducing social isolation, and providing opportunities for participation in healthy activities and learning about their communities.[110] Newcomers themselves cite integration and meeting new people, along with opportunities for physical activity to be healthy (including stress reduction and family time), fit and have fun as important reasons for participating, while competition has been rated as the least important reason.[111]

Participation Rates

Overall, immigrants and new citizens (defined as immigrants who have been in Canada for at least three years and have attained Canadian citizenship[111]) are generally less likely to participate in organized sports than people who were born in Canada.[75] Only 26%[*] of new citizens reported engaging in sports at least once per week in 2014.[111] However, 63% managed to participate in sport occasionally during their first three years in Canada. While there is a lower rate of participation for the entire group when compared to Canadian-born residents, participation rates differ by length of time since arriving in Canada. The 2016 GSS[41] reported that,

compared to the overall rate for Canadian-born citizens (28%):

- 16% of newcomers who arrived prior to 1990 report sport participation;
- 25% of those who arrived between 1990 and 2009 report participation in sport; and
- 25% of recent immigrants (arriving between 2010 and 2016) report sport participation.

Female sport participation is lower than male regardless of length of Canadian residency.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**[112] Children of immigrants who had been in Canada for less than 10 years are less likely to participate in sports than children of Canadian-born parents.[113]

Data from the US show similar trends in physical activity between US-born and immigrant children, such that, with the exception of children from Europe and Canada, all children in immigrant families have lower levels of vigorous activity and group sports participation compared to children from US-born families.[114]

Individual Level Barriers

Newcomers face challenges with particular characteristics unique or additional to those of Canadian-born residents. These challenges include having other priorities (e.g., settling in and finding employment, a place to live, organizing schools and other services); having enough time (e.g., there are additional demands on time when

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[*] These data are from a different survey from rates reported elsewhere and cannot be directly

compared. In addition, varying cultural interpretations of sport may influence the data.

adapting to life in a new country); lack of time due to long travel times to access recreation;[115] a lack of familiarity with mainstream sports, the way sports are organized, how to get involved, or with Canadian sport infrastructure;[111] and language difficulties.[109,114,245]

Girls and women may not have had access to sporting opportunities in their country of origin due to societal gender norms, the lack of sport facilities, an absence of role models, and a lack of a taste for sport among their family members, thereby preventing the development of sporting capital.[144]

Interpersonal Level Barriers

Barriers include lacking someone to play with; a lack of opportunities; family attitudes;[109] not feeling welcome or comfortable;[111] feeling isolated and alienated within the club environment;[116] and differences in social setting expectations.[117] For example, certain social settings that are considered 'normal' in the host society (e.g., drinking alcohol after games) may be uncomfortable for members of some cultural groups.[75] Racism is sometimes reported as part if the sport and recreation experience among new immigrants and refugees,[118,75,111] who have also sometimes reported discrimination and a lack of cultural sensitivity in sporting environments.[109]

Organizational and System Level Barriers

Newcomer youth report difficulty finding information on specific low-cost or free programs that fit their interests and schedule and are located close to home or school; linguistic and cultural barriers to finding information on subsidy programs; and intimidating or challenging subsidy application or program registration processes.[115]

The diversity of traditions, cultural needs and experience may challenge mainstream sport programs' capacity to meet the needs of newcomers.[116,117,119] Additionally, recreation service providers report insufficient funding for programming and staffing.[115]

Socio-economically Disadvantaged Canadians

Participation Rates

Socioeconomic factors are likely the most important determinants of sport participation.[120] Data collected in 2005,

indicate that children who lived in households with the lowest incomes, and whose parents had not graduated high school were less likely to play sports.[113] Similarly, 2016 GSS[41] and 2018 PAM[58] data indicate that adults with lower levels of household income and lower attained levels of education are less likely to participate in sport. In 2016, 17% of those whose annual family income was less than $25,000 participated regulaly in sport compared to 30% of those whose annual family income what at least $125,000.[41]

Individual Level Barriers

Lack of time is a particularly powerful barrier among those living in low income circumstances.[121] In families where both parents work, and in single parent families, finding the time to support children's sport participation can be a challenge. Similarly, adults themselves who work long hours, or more than one job have less leisure time in which to pursue participation in sport. Closely related to time barriers is the lack of child care for parents who wish to participate.[121]

Barriers to those living in low-income circumstances go beyond economic capacity. There are other hidden requirements that disproportionately impact those living with lower incomes, involving early participation and the development of particular abilities. For adults, barriers may also include lost opportunity to have developed the necessary skills as children and the related feelings of awkwardness in trying to learn them as an adult.[122]

Early and consistent participation helps to develop abilities required to address skill level, belonging, and the cultural capital needed for inclusion and an enjoyable experience. Programming for this group can be inconsistent and lack continuity. Grants provide for short term programs on an intermittent basis and there is little opportunity to continually develop skills on an ongoing basis; something that more privileged families pay for all season. In addition, if the broader cultural capital barriers are not acknowledged, the presence of fee assistance programs is not likely to be sufficient in addressing the more deeply rooted processes of exclusion that impact the sport experience.[123] Thus, socio-economically disadvantaged Canadians often miss out on opportunities of their more privileged peers and do not then learn the rules, basic skills (such as ball-handling skills, offensive strategy, etc.) or ways of conforming to a particular sport's etiquette

at an early age. Without these necessary forms of ability, young people experience exclusion from and within sport.[123]

The material conditions of life circumstances of these individuals also mean that they are likely to place a lower value on sport participation than their more privileged peers and furthermore, sporting tastes can be shaped by class. Members of this group sometimes feel that without the benefits of fitting in and feeling a sense of belonging, the effort of overcoming the economic and structural obstacles to participation is not worth it.[123] Youth from low-socioeconomic circumstances experience exclusion because they are denied entry into sport, have less-than-meaningful experiences within sport, or they make choices not to participate.[123] Youth may feel that the sports offered do not resonate with them or that they do not belong.[123]

Interpersonal Level Barriers

On an interpersonal level, family support[118] and sexism have been reported as barriers to low-income participants.[118]

Organizational and System Level Barriers

Families are less likely to be able to afford the cost of registration fees, equipment and transportation to local and out of town games.[122] Transportation alone has also been cited as a barrier.[118,121] In addition, many low-cost or free programs fill up quickly and can have long waiting lists. Despite multiple payment options, paying

online or over the telephone with a credit card are usually the fastest ways to register. Families without internet or a credit card are at a disadvantage when competing for high-demand programs.[115]

While schools work to provide opportunities for sport participation, a US study found that a higher percentage of students from high socioeconomic status schools participated in interscholastic and intramural sport than those from low socioeconomic status schools.[124] Another US study found that students from low income circumstances who attended a school that provided intramurals were more likely to participate in sport than children from low income homes attending a school with inter-scholastic teams.[125]

Though most municipalities, non-profit fitness and recreation facilities and various other initiatives offer subsidy programs or other assistance, they are viewed by many, particularly the intended recipients, as demeaning, embarrassing and stigmatizing, and are thus often under-utilized. Common system level interventions aimed at those in low socio-economic circumstances have been ineffective and there is a need to address more than the obvious economic barriers (i.e., the lack of social capital development) to the quality of sport engagement.[123] Finally, some programs do not have sufficient means to help everyone and some potential participants are left without this assistance and some families who do not qualify because their income is

above the cut-off for assistance, still can't afford to participate.

Canadians Living in Rural, Remote and Isolated Regions

Participation Rates

Data from 2005 indicated that rural[*] children aged 5 to 14, while maintaining participation rates similar to their peers in large cities, have lower levels of sport participation than those who live in small cities and towns.[113] While about half (49%) of Canada's rural children, and a similar proportion (47%) of children in Canada's three largest cities (Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver) and in mid-sized census metropolitan areas (51%) regularly took part in sports during the previous 12 months, 58% of those living in smaller cities and towns (populations between 10,000 and 50,000 did so.[113] Data are not available for sport participation in Northern Canada.

Individual Level Barriers

Those living in the North[†] reported barriers to participating in recreation including those related to lifestyle (e.g., smoking, substance use, screen time)[88] and perceived lack of skills.[88] Barriers reported by rural youth include negative experiences in school athletics, and, for some, the level of

competitiveness that was not to their liking.[126]

Interpersonal Level Barriers

Barriers to participation of rural youth have been reported to include lack of social support, interest and encouragement from friends and family.[126] Barriers to participation in recreation reported by those living in the Territories include social issues (e.g., drinking, gambling, family violence)[88] and family issues (e.g., parents lack social skills to encourage their children to get involved, parent(s) are too busy working, and family needs compete for time).[88]

Organizational and System Level Barriers

Rural and remote environments present unique barriers to sport participation. Key reported barriers include physical distance to facilities to practice or compete,

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[*] Statistics Canada defines rural as territory lying outside population centres. It may include small towns, villages and other populated places with less than 1,000 population and also remote and wilderness areas.

[†] "North" typically refers to locations in the Territories, whereas "north" refers to the northern regions in the provinces. The term "isolated" generally refers to communities that are accessible only by airplane.

transportation, social isolation, lack of facilities and community offerings, and a lack of human capital to sustain initiatives (e.g., having a sufficient population base to create a team, or from which to draw coaches and other officials).[127,128,88]

In the North,[129] access to recreation is even more restricted by both the distance from cities, and limits to outdoor sport activities due to the fewer hours of daylight during the school year and extreme weather conditions.[88] Barriers are experienced differently by low-income children in the North than in southern communities. For example, cost (of user fees or equipment) is not cited as a barrier with the same frequency as it is in the south, because most programs and access to equipment are subsidized or free.[88] However, programs in the North experience loss of volunteers due to burnout or moving away, and a lack of government understanding of local needs.[88]

A lack of indoor facilities may further add to these limitations, particularly in the North. Schools are sometimes the only facility for children and youth to participate in sport in a rural environment and supports such as late busing are needed to ensure participation in after-school opportunities.

Sexual and Gender Minority Canadians

Sport participation by people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Two-Spirit, Intersex, Asexual, and other identities that fall outside of cisgender and heterosexual paradigms (LGBTQ2IA+) is affected by attitudes, discrimination, sexual harassment, and abuse. An increasing number of Canadians, and at a younger age than in the past, are identifying as LGBTQ2IA+. An estimated 5 to 15% of the adult population and one-quarter of high school students identify as LGBTQ2IA+.[130] Younger athletes and younger coaches are feeling more comfortable with sexual and gender diversity, as evidenced by the fact that more LGBTQ2IA+ athletes and coaches are coming out during their sport career, rather than waiting until they retire. While participation numbers are unknown, for a youth-based team of 15-20 players, this could translate into five or more athletes. Barriers can also be present for children of LGBTQ2IA+ parents.

Participation Rates

Data on sport participation rates among members of this group are non-existent given the sensitivity of collecting the data. However, qualitative research[131] indicates that sport participation rates among LGBTQ2IA+ people may be strongly gendered, with gay men less likely to engage in organized sports and lesbian women more likely to. Estimates from the USA suggest that sexual minority young people are about half as likely to participate in school-based sports compared to their heterosexual counterparts.[132]

Research has identified decreasing participation rates over time in formal sports along with the gap in participation rates between sexual minority and

heterosexual youth widening over time.[132] However, the same research found narrowing of the gaps in disparities in participation in informal sports without a coach, indicating a higher level of discomfort among sexual minority teens with coached sports.[132]

Organizational and System Level Barriers

Almost all of the barriers to sport participation for this group stem from societal reactions to their identity as members of this group. Individual level barriers stem from the ways that members of this group are treated and interpersonal barriers stem from societal or system level attitudes and 'norms' or expectations.

Equality issues around sexual orientation and gender identity are still seen differently from comparable issues on race, gender or disability, and the underlying prejudices are different. Much of the prejudice and negativity around LGBTQ2IA+ issues in sport can be traced back to the application of gender stereotypes and perception of masculinity and femininity.[131]

Locker rooms, that are places of intimate team bonding and associated initiation rituals for rookies, can be homophobic and sexist, both in language and behaviour, and can make participation in sport very uncomfortable, unwelcoming and sometimes unsafe for LGBTQ2IA+ individuals.[132,137] Members of sexual minority groups are often harassed, negatively stereotyped and socially excluded.[133] While efforts to penalize

players for using homophonic language in play are growing, and hazing or initiation rituals, with activities grounded in homophobia, are beginning to be addressed,[132] sport has not yet eradicated these behaviours.

For girls and women, homophobia in sport presents an obstacle to participation for both gay and straight females: lesbians who are not welcomed and heterosexual girls and women who are reluctant to pursue sport activities to avoid a lesbian label.[134,135]

The sport community has recently taken an increased interest in looking for policies regarding transgendered participation in sport.[136] The majority of transgender people have had a negative experience when engaging in competitive sports and sport-related physical activity and report a lack of accessibility to an inclusive and comfortable environment.[137] At the recreational level, transgender individuals should be able to participate in the gender with which they identify.[136]

Older Adults

Continued involvement in sport activities as one ages is one way to realize the health benefits of active living and maintain social engagement.

Participation Rates

Few older adults participate regularly in organised sport[138] and, in general, participation in sport declines with age.[58] The 2016 GSS[41] reported that 18% of Canadians aged 55 or older regularly

participate in sport. Masters sports welcome Canadians over the age of 35 but for the purposes of this discussion, older adults are considered to be over 55 and, more generally, over 65 years of age.

Individual Level Barriers

Health concerns appear to be a primary barrier to being physically active or participating in sport, along with injury or illness, joint and muscle problems, pain, limited mobility, or loss of ability to perform activities of daily living.[138,139,141,243] Time constraints have also been cited as a barrier by members of this group.[140,141] Unique to this group, however, are the time constraints related to prioritizing their children/grandchildren's participation and sport spectatorship, over their own active participation,[140] or to care giving responsibilities of grandchildren or partners.[141,140] Similar to barriers for other groups, members of this group sometimes cited being unsure what to do.[243] Other barriers include reluctance to leave home, an inconvenient program location, logistical issues such as schedule conflicts, weather and transportation, vacations, and the preference to exercise in one's own home.[141]

Interpersonal Level Barriers

Prevailing cultural attitudes and stereotypes, which in North America tend to be predominantly negative towards seniors, and the interaction of gender, language, religion and ethno-cultural identity can play a significant and complex role in the sport participation of older adults.[142,141] Ageist stereotypes and cultural norms can instill uncertainty of the "societal appropriateness" of playing some sports at an older age.[53] In addition, many older women have been discouraged from exercise during their youth.[53] Older adults also cite a lack of people to exercise with.[243]

Organizational and System Level Barriers

Older adults note that there is a lack of appropriate playing opportunities such as senior teams or competitions, inappropriate facilities or few opportunities in close geographical proximity.[138] Like members of other groups, older adults can be faced with the barrier of cost,[243] and can have concerns about safety.[140,146]

Increasing Sport Participation Among Members of Underrepresented Groups

Framework

Sport is about more than training and performance and participation is about more than just the number of participants who show up to be counted. Quality, positive sport participation increases the chances of continued engagement, and includes experiential aspects related to inclusion and community integration including autonomy (having independence, choice, or control), belongingness (feeling a sense of belonging to a group), engagement (feeling motivated, focused, or involved in an activity), meaning (having a sense of responsibility to oneself or others), mastery (gaining a sense of accomplishment), and challenge (feeling appropriately challenged).[90,199] While these aspects are introduced in literature focused on inclusion and integration of individuals with a disability (and form the core of the Quality Parasport Participation Framework), they can be applied to the experience of members of all underrepresented groups.

The Seven Pillars of Inclusion[261] is a broad framework that presents common elements that contribute to creating inclusive environments that reflect the communities that we live in. The seven pillars include access, attitude, choice, partnerships, communication, policy, and opportunities.

This section provides the evidence for increasing participation in sport for underrepresented groups within the experiential aspects of the quality participation framework with the elements of pillars of inclusion woven throughout. Practical ideas for action are presented in supplements to this report entitled *Evidence-Based Ideas for Action to Increase Sport Participation Among Members of Underrepresented Groups*. These supplements provide ideas for policy makers, for national and provincial/territorial sport and recreation organizations, and for local sport providers, coaches, leaders and teachers.

None of these actions is the answer alone. For example, offering subsidies without providing a welcoming environment will not entice people to come or to stay. A holistic, locally tailored approach, with a critical mass of actions, that support each other in a way that is stronger than the individual components, is needed. Choosing the right combination applicable to the local context and a particular community or population will be up to individual providers, who have consulted with, and are advised by, members of the target community.

Mastery, Challenge and Autonomy

To be comfortable and feel at home in sport participation, a certain level of skill is needed. The sense of mastery[*] is a key motivator to sport participation. Positive attitudes about self-efficacy and competence facilitate participation and engagement.[96,140,143,144] For example, predictors of girls' liking or loving their sport centres around not being afraid to try new skills, not being one of the least-skilled players on the team, having coaches that encourage skill building, emphasise effort and trying a new skill over winning, and learning from mistakes while staying positive.[145] Feeling skilled can make participation easier for adolescent girls, as it reduces the fear of being singled out in front of others or of letting a team down.[74] Older adults are motivated by the way that being active allows them to independently accomplish daily tasks.[146]

While the *Canadian Sport Policy* has focused on physical literacy and sport skills in the early years, many members of underrepresented groups may have not had the opportunity for skill development at this age level, due to socio-economic disadvantage, physical or health challenges, past residency in other countries (e.g., living in a refugee camp or countries where sport is a privilege of the very few), cultural norms (e.g., particular sports are not played in their culture of origin, or women are not

encouraged to participate) or marginalization due to other reasons (e.g., sexual orientation, gender identity, physical limitations). When physical literacy is not at the level of one's peers, an individual has difficulty accessing opportunities to improve. They may be the last one picked for a team, discouraged from joining, benched during a game where the focus is on winning, or simply left on the sidelines. On a more personal level, they may not feel that they have sufficient skills to even think of joining up.[123] Inclusive recreation programs for players of all ages, skill levels and physical abilities that provide opportunities for skill development, increase self-confidence and encourage participation.[123,103]

Along with mastering the physical literacy and the cultural capital needed for sport participation, the opportunity to develop leadership skills for coaching, refereeing, or participating in an administrative capacity, is closely tied to the concepts of challenge, mastery and becoming a role model to inspire the participation of other group members. These additional types of opportunities may increase participation for some as a preferred and previously unknown way to participate in sport,[108] and may also provide a gateway to greater levels of participation for people who have never been exposed to the sport. Pathways for members of underrepresented groups

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[*] For the purposes of this report, mastery entails having a minimal level of competency and physical

literacy to feel comfortable participating with one's peers.

for developing these attributes are also needed.[55,195,147]

Offering a Range of Opportunities

The creation of positive experiences includes access to choices.[148] Programmers should consider offering a variety of sport programming and levels, from introduction and basic skills, to intramural and house leagues (with no cut policies), to elite competition, to attract more and a greater diversity of participants,[53,125,124,158] and provide opportunities for all citizens to participate in sports, regardless of skill level.[124,103,169] Offering introductory or skills development programs, providing opportunities to try different sports and hone physical literacy, and offering an array of sports are strategies that are likely to engage all participants at all levels.[150] Sport providers should offer a wide variety of appropriate activities[149,115,126,50,150,151,152] including non-mainstream sports that may appeal to immigrants[153] and women,[154] traditional Indigenous games,[159] gender-relevant programming to attract, for example, adolescent girls,[72,74] integrated and tailored sport opportunities for people with a disability,[155,156] and opportunities that reflect cultural gender differences and different past levels of access.[150] Offering a range of levels from cooperative to competitive options can enhance intercultural relations, camaraderie, collaboration, social cohesion, and attitudes related to the acceptance of others.[253]

Offering ongoing, opportunities where individuals can try out a number of sports and determine what they are interested in and what level of competition suits them in a free or low-cost, safe and supportive environment[116,150,66] can attract participants with low commitment opportunities. Having experts on hand to support these sessions can support potential participants with advice on ways to adapt sports (for physical differences or for desired level of contact or exertion).[157,138]

In schools, intramural sports with no cut policies offer opportunities for skill development among children and youth.[158,124,125] A 'whole school approach' which caters to girls' sporting interests and abilities, and curriculum that develops relationships between achievement goals, ability beliefs, self-determination and enjoyment of physical education, may be useful to engage girls.[71]

Programmers should offer culturally sensitive sport programs based on Indigenous cultural and physical practices.[36,80,79] Participating in activities such as traditional games, which incorporate traditional ways and Indigenous values, such as Indigenous dance or games that are played at the Artic Winter Games or North American Indigenous Games, provide a unique opportunity to enhance the sport experiences of Indigenous youth and will increase the likelihood of their participation.[159] The TRC's Call to Action #90i outlined the need for "community sport programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities" of Indigenous peoples.[159]

For persons with a disability, choice is paramount. Persons with a disability (and potentially others) should be afforded individual choice of a sporting activity across a continuum of segregated, integrated and inclusive approaches, rather than be placed in an activity by professionals.[160] While some individuals may choose to engage in community sport programs, others may have more success participating in a program designed for particular ability levels.

The inclusion spectrum[161] provides for various levels of modifications to deliver games and activities in different ways with more options, and encourages higher quality participation by persons with a disability, both with or away from their able-bodied peers.[161] The side bar offers examples of modifications along the inclusion spectrum for persons with a disability to choose their own level of participation based on their functional ability, their chosen sport, personal preferences and available opportunities.[161]

Adapting and modifying sport minimises or eliminates disadvantage and enables new rules and equipment to be introduced as players mature and their skills improve.[261] Similarly, "learn-to" programs for those entering a sport later than the majority of participants provides an opportunity for participants with a disability to work on skill development and catch up with their peers.[150]

Segregated sports provide persons with a disability, especially those who value their

connections to the disability community or who lack prior activity experience, opportunities to access the support of leaders and more experienced participants who can help them tap into personal strengths, observe peers participating at accomplished levels, develop skills, and involve family and friends to join them in their activities (where appropriate) or to volunteer.[162] These may lead to increases in confidence or desire to participate in more integrated settings should that be a chosen option.[162]

Programmers should focus on ensuring programs are flexible and adapted to individual needs and strengths. This could

Examples of the Inclusion Spectrum
• No modifications: an athlete with an intellectual disability may train and compete with athletes without intellectual disability at a local swimming club
• Minor modifications: a vision impaired tenpin bowler using a rail for support
• Major modifications: a seated shot-putter competing under separate rules using modified equipment against other athletes with disability in an integrated track and field competition
• Primarily for people with a disability: athletes with disability and their able-bodied peers combine to form teams for the purpose of developing a wheelchair basketball competition
• Only for people with a disability: goalball players participating in a competition exclusively for people with vision impairments
• Non-playing role: people with disability can be officials, coaches, club presidents, volunteers and spectators.

include developing a noncontact version of a sport or one that requires lower physical exertion (e.g., for older adults) and offering programming that matches participants' requirements for a particular level of difficulty.[163,164,165,166,50] Offering women-only and girls-only[78,149,150,167] and mixed-gendered[130,137,168] sports will ensure there are offerings to meet individual participation goals and comfort levels.

Providing Challenge

There needs to be a societal balance between focusing on the development of elite athletes and a sport for all focus that enables all Canadian residents to participate at the level of their choice. Along with a focus on funding and developing international excellence at the elite level, there needs to be ongoing well funded sport opportunities that focus on fun, social inclusion and sport's role in supporting a healthy active lifestyle for all. Programmers should focus on creating an environment where different levels of competition are welcomed, appreciated and consistent with abilities and skills.[72]

Individuals vary in the types of factors that motivate them. While some thrive on increasing levels of challenge, competition and advancing in sport, others just want to go out and have fun with their friends and don't care

about the score. It is important to understand motivation for participation and honouring a participant's reasons. Consider, for example, the case where three girls sign up for an activity together. If one is told she is 'too good' for the level they signed up for and forced to join another, more advanced class (which might be justified by the LTAD) that is offered at a different time, there is a very real risk of all three girls dropping out altogether, because their reason for participating has not been respected and the social aspect and sense of belongingness have been taken from them.

It is important to understand, acknowledge and honour reasons for participating in a sport and not to enforce athletic development standards on those who are not looking for that type of experience. Accommodating all levels of skill and competition and supporting choice of participation level provides the variety of experiences sought by different individuals.

Promoting Access

Access can take a number of forms:

- physical accessibility, particularly for persons with a disability, but also for those who have other particular needs;

- getting to facilities and programming, mainly due to transportation and facility location; and

- affordability.

To improve skill levels, potential participants need to be able to access places to practice and compete. This includes physical accessibility, appropriate equipment and staff qualifications, and provisions for safety. Access to nearby quality barrier-free infrastructure and facilities[76] such as schools, ball fields, green spaces, workplaces, natural amenities, places of worship, community halls, or indeed, any facilities in more remote areas and on-Reserve, will increase participation.[122,127,36,101,96,169] This involves ensuring access to a venue that has accessible and gender neutral bathrooms and change facilities with cubicles;[97,102,137,255] modified equipment;[96,97] entrances and exits that are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and other mobility aids; adequate lighting;[148] signage with large print or braille;[148] and no stairs.[97]

Many of Canada's sport and recreation facilities are aging and in need of repair and upgrades to meet modern accessibility standards. The original construction of many came from funding stemming from

Canada's centennial celebrations. This means they are over 50 years old. Others, built since then, are also aging, and they too, require ongoing maintenance and upgrades.[170,171] Infrastructure funding to support these costs will help ensure that facilities are available, accessible and inviting.

Economic barriers to access can include the cost of program or registration fees,[81,172,50] the costs of transportation both to local facilities and for out-of-region competition,[115,81] and the costs of equipment (swim wear, uniforms, running shoes, workout clothes, etc.),[50,88,78] coaches and trainers[120,173,122,174,149] and childcare.[115,118]

Programmers could address cost barriers by providing financial support through free or subsidized programming, transportation and access to equipment (including specialized or adapted equipment).[3,6,88,117,178,175,149,174,115] Access to subsidy programs should be simple and dignified for low-income families (e.g., no proof of income, simple paperwork).[37,176]

Addressing the participation levels of people from lower income circumstances poses particular challenges. For example, recreation service providers are sometimes concerned that subsidizing program costs for older adults could lead to problems with oversubscription.[53] The constant pressure on municipal services to be self-sustaining or contribute to a city's overall cost savings or revenue generation conflicts with the need to serve the most vulnerable. However, " … there is growing evidence that the cost of providing increased opportunities to participate may be offset and, in some cases, more than pay for itself in terms of reduced costs in other areas of public spending such as physical and mental health, crime, and education."[120 (p. 203-204)]

Offering programming in centralized facilities that are distant from many potential users or hard to get to can create barriers to participation. For residents of rural and remote areas, specialized facilities may be sparse or non-existent. Addressing transportation barriers to improve access can take the form of ensuring that public transit is accessible, offers direct routes, feels safe, is affordable (e.g. via subsidizing transit fares, providing tickets or providing transport),[3,177] providing late bussing after school or creatively funding longer distance transportation.[178,150] Travel distance can be minimized by increasing the number of facilities and/or service providers involved in a program,[177] conveniently locating sport facilities,[76] actively promoting public transport convenience and accessibility to sport facilities,[76] or by reorganizing programming to fit with public transport availability.[3] Access can also be improved through hosting programs in close proximity to participants in existing community buildings, such as schools and community centres or within walking distance of public transport.[3,76,118,78,50]

To improve mastery at all skill levels for all Canadian residents, stakeholders could consider ensuring a range of available opportunities, challenging participants at the level of their choosing and ensuring access.

Engagement and Meaning

Members of underrepresented groups have experienced marginalization in many aspects of their lives. "Religious persecution, colonization, homophobia, racism, poverty, ageism and gender inequality are just some of the other areas that can begin to be addressed through effective sport and recreation inclusion policy."[179(p.389)] To address these feelings of marginalization, potential sport participants need to feel that they are contributing and that participation is meaningful.

Co-creating Programs

For members of underrepresented groups to feel comfortable in participating, they need to feel engaged in meaningful activity and have a sense of ownership and emotional investment. Involving individual participants, their advocates and communities in the design, implementation and evaluation of a program through advisory groups, in-depth consultations or surveys, ensures sport programming is tailored to meet their needs, values, preferences, expectations, motivations, culture and barriers, and contributes to program providers' understanding of individual and community needs.[1,3,6,8,16,56,72,74,80,78,88,115,116,122,150,149,164,174,180,181,182,183,184,185,186,187,188,189,190,191,192,193,194,222,103,175] Such consultation promotes engagement,[126,255,256,35,50,96] supports participation of a diversity of participants,[103] helps to ensure cultural sensitivity,[192] encourages the inclusion of culturally relevant activities that are owned by the

community, and focuses on understanding how sport can fit into and connect with participant lives, rather than trying to change participants to fit sport.[195] It can lead to programs that are sustainable in the long-term[82,256] and increases the likelihood that program administrators don't make programming decisions based on their own perceptions of what might be appropriate, which may be influenced by cultural norms and stereotypes.[53]

Engaging members of underrepresented groups requires identifying and building relationships with community leaders to develop confidence and trust.[3,53] Such engagement must be undertaken in ways that are respectful of community members' knowledge and cultural ways of understanding sport and sport leadership.[196] In consulting with the community, sport organizers and administrators need to be flexible, adaptable, willing to yield and share their power, and open and committed to change and to questioning their assumptions and

stereotypes.[3,53,179,202,197] Engaging key opinion leaders, community stakeholders, and/or community coalitions in recruitment and delivery of an intervention are advantageous strategies to enhance participant enrolment and engagement.[213] Furthermore, addressing the self-identified needs of members of the Indigenous community helps to avoid the perpetuation of the effects of colonialism, such as the assumption that non-Indigenous peoples know what is best for Indigenous peoples.[82] Facilitating direct engagement of Indigenous youth in both initiating and managing programs and activities can empower local communities to develop the skills to sustain programs and outcomes.[185,192]

Adopting an Intersectoral Approach

Partnerships between sport organizations and community agencies can support the sharing of knowledge and skills, improve planning, increase points of contact with communities of interest, and assist with recruitment and retention. To ensure programming reflects the needs of participants, programmers should consider working in partnership with community organizations.[60,88,150,174] Strong intersectoral partnerships (e.g., across all sectors and levels of government, within communities, schools and workplaces, with academia and community-based and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), with Indigenous groups, and with the corporate sector) across levels (e.g., federal, provincial/territorial, local) will increase the

success of programing, service delivery and, policy efforts, and enhance cultural safety.[150,169,198,185,80]

Interprofessional collaboration among health and recreation professionals, increases participation among persons with a disability[199,17] through testing and delivery of strategies to increase sport participation.[200] For example, health professionals such as physiotherapists can advise on activity limitations and appropriate movement, and sport organizations can work with them to modify activities and advise them on what sport opportunities may be available for their clients.[108]

Regular collaboration can support mutual inclusion goals, as sport organizations have skills and structures for sport delivery, while community agencies understand the needs and barriers of priority groups and have extensive community networks.[3,250] Furthermore, partnerships among organizations of the same sport can enable pooling resources to help address the funding and training shortfalls,[108] to jointly address barriers, and to work towards successfully identifying methods to improve their systems and structures to increase participation.[150]

Creating partnerships takes organizational commitment[179] and time, and it may be prudent to reach out to only a few partners at time to ensure consistent engagement and communication and to get to know the distinctiveness of each partner or community well to craft appropriate

responses and programming, and maintain program integrity.[3,256]

Taking a Holistic Approach

An approach based on the social-ecological model encourages a shift from focusing on single issues, risk factors and linear causality, towards a holistic approach to providing support at all levels.[55,201] Such an approach to the creation of programming addresses all aspects of the participant's experience, including the meanings and satisfactions that they derive from participating, and recognizes the different influences on an individual including interpersonal, intrapersonal, environment and policy related factors. The six common themes (autonomy, belongingness, engagement, meaning, mastery and challenge) used to organize this report recognize the holistic experience of sport.

While focusing on the whole person and the whole experience has been cited as beneficial for members of a number of groups, it takes on particular meanings for members of the Indigenous population, and involves incorporating the history and story of traditional games and their connection to the land,[159] embracing Indigenous meanings of sport,[35,202,203] and focusing on the contribution of physical activity to the improvement of emotional, physical, and spiritual health.[35,54]

Addressing barriers at all levels of the social-ecological model for participants from underrepresented groups requires engagement of numerous community groups and support networks (including parents, siblings, Elders, school administrators and other community members), and the creation of cross-sector, interprofessional, multi-level and cross-cultural partnerships and communication.[54,199,127,174,179,186,204,205,206,90,158] It also involves coordination of cross government departmental mandates that extends across jurisdictions and ministries.[17]

Using Sport for Development in a Holistic Approach

Sport for development uses sport as a vehicle for economic development and social change, in areas related to humanitarian, cultural, ethical and peace-building causes.[2] Though such opportunities are often associated with international efforts, there are organizations that are including the power of sport to engage

underrepresented groups in their efforts in Canada. Sport for development, involves tapping into what sport can do 'intentionally' to address a range of community priorities, such as community building; promoting good citizenship; enhancing leadership skills; developing social skills, conflict resolution and positive peer relations; health promotion; teaching rules norms and values; promoting positive self-esteem and self-worth; decreasing antisocial behaviour; engaging marginalized youth; stimulating economic revitalization; and supporting newcomer settlement.[207,211] Further, it can contribute to coaching and leadership training, the contribution of youth to society, and help to create a cohesive society, irrespective of culture, socio-economic circumstances, religion, age and sexual identity.[208]

While inclusion is imperative for participation in sport for development initiatives, their primary focus is on social benefits through sport rather than increasing participation in sport (although that may be a side benefit). Sport for development activities are often undertaken by community organizations that are not sport organizations. There is an opportunity for sport organizations to work with these other community organizations to both learn about community members' sport inclusion needs, and for community organizations to learn sport delivery techniques from sporting organizations.

Using Health Promotion in a Holistic Approach

Sport in and of itself is a logical vehicle for health promotion. Promoting the benefits of physical activity and sport, such as maintaining independence, improved or maintained physical and mental health, self-actualization, social interactions and a sense of accomplishment, may facilitate interest in participation[209,140,74,146,103,146,245] For example, positive attitudes and beliefs about being active (e.g., can improve function) have been reported as facilitating participation among persons with a disability.[96] The creation of Healthy and Welcoming Environments within clubs has been shown to facilitate changes in personal health behaviours, and increase club participation and membership.[241]

Health promoting sport also has the potential to address some of the negative aspects of sport including injuries, eating disorders, pressure to win, doping, substance abuse, aggressive parents, and early specialization. Sport organizations can take a whole health approach[210] and work with others to build healthy policy, create supportive environments, strengthen community action, develop personal skills, and reorient health services. Sport clubs have the opportunity to become supportive and healthy environments in all aspects of the way they function and benefit from a culture shift that will positively impact participants, coaches, volunteers and parents.[211]

Belongingness

To feel comfortable participating in a sport, or even coming through the door of a recreation centre, all Canadian residents, and particularly members of underrepresented groups, need to feel that they are welcome, that they belong and that they are offered relevant programming. Creating a sense of belongingness is more than just opening doors and removing physical or social barriers for participation in mainstream programs and activities.[179,148] "The problem with this approach is that sport policies and practices that have excluded people in the first place are left unexamined and unchallenged… this can leave responsibility for social inclusion to those who have been historically excluded and require them to figure out how to include themselves into a

system that does not necessarily meet their needs."[179(p.392)] In addition to welcoming sport participants, a culture of inclusion recognizes, respects, values and utilizes the talents and contribution of all the organization's people,[212] ensuring that its values are reflected in its staffing[213] and demonstrated to its public.

Taking a Human Rights Approach to Inclusion

Sport and recreation departments are mandated to offer programming that will attract participants, have full registrations and generate sufficient revenue. Offering specialized programs to underrepresented groups that may have low registration (e.g., women only swim times) may conflict with this mandate. Similarly, sport teams

struggle with the potentially conflicting goals of competitiveness and winning, versus promoting diversity and inclusive participation, when not all of those included, be they from underrepresented groups or from the mainstream, will be high performing athletes. Sport clubs that focus on performance may minimize the emphasis on diversity, while those that actively promote diversity may be regarded as not serious and as having little or no interest in developing talented players.[214]

Offering opportunities on the basis of supporting human rights (i.e., all citizens have a right to sport programs) and where assimilation into mainstream sport is not the goal, would ensure provision of appropriate programming.[179,181,215,227] Sport participation can be increased among members of underrepresented groups when leaders at all levels recognize and systematize the human rights perspective in considering program offerings and use moral or ethical guidelines as a basis for promoting social inclusion.[187,179] This perspective includes thinking in terms of equal rights (e.g., to sport participation and leadership), equal value (e.g., of different abilities and cultural practices), equal treatment (e.g., a lack of discrimination),[179(p.394)] and managing for diversity (making organisations more workable and welcoming for people from diverse backgrounds rather than

managing members of the targeted group to fit the organisation)[216].

The full and equal participation of all citizens in sport is called for by the 2006, United Nations declaration that individuals with a disability have a basic right to "full and effective participation" in society, including in sport,[90] and the *Truth and Reconciliation Calls for Action*.[159]

Parallel Opportunities and Reverse Integration

The sporting experience and meaning are not cultureless, but can be deeply rooted in culture and relational context.[159] Promoting and encouraging diversity, rather than just removing barriers to participating in mainstream sport opportunities, means providing opportunities that would appeal to many cultures and providing access to range of activities.

Parallel opportunities are those where there are segregated sporting activities for specific groups. The Gay Games were initially created as an opportunity for gays

and lesbians to show the world that their skills and competitive spirit were equal to the rest of humanity as often LGBTQ2IA+ sport participants felt they had to hide their sexual orientation. The Gay Games are an opportunity to participate in sport in a supportive, welcoming atmosphere and are intended to build bridges, strengthen community and bolster self-esteem, while promoting the spirit of inclusion and participation, as well the pursuit of personal growth in a sporting event.[217]

For Indigenous peoples, a double helix model of parallel and mainstream sport systems with cross links at various levels of achievement and competition has been proposed.[206] Both systems advance athletes through their own structures. It illustrates a system for Canada's Indigenous Peoples that is equal to the mainstream system, self determined, separately funded, and culturally owned, relevant and appropriate. The cross bars are points where the Canadian mainstream system connects and contributes to the Indigenous sport system but where, to date, the power is unequal.[206] Navigating the crossing of these connecting points pose challenges for some Indigenous athletes as they deal with cultural tensions.[158] The Indigenous Games pathway includes the provision of cultural sporting experiences, training for leaders, volunteers, recreation directors, coaches and producing qualifying

Figure 2 Double Helix

athletes. It increases participation at all levels.[35,80]

Reverse integration provides opportunities for mainstream athletes to participate in the sports of underrepresented groups. Opening participation in a variety of cultural sports or physically adapted sports can ensure there are sufficient numbers for a program or league and ensure friends and supporters can join in.[110,218,181,116] For example, opening Indigenous sports opportunities to all can promote cross-cultural experiences and understanding for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.[36] Integrated programs can provide opportunities for persons with a disability to reap the social benefits of participating alongside able-bodied friends and family.[96] While some students without a disability have expressed concerns about modification of rules and gameplay leading to decreased intensity and quality of play, programming has been developed to promote respect for sporting achievements, and respecting and accepting individual differences.[99]

Offering the games of other countries can provide traditional experiences open to both newcomers and long-term Canadians from that culture (and beyond) to provide access to cultural experiences. Newcomers may bring different types of sport literacy or coaching skills of the sports from their home country with them and have something to offer programmers, other Canadians and newcomers alike.

Promoting to Target Audiences

One of the barriers cited by many members of underrepresented groups is a lack of information. Participants desire information about what sporting opportunities are available.[108] Organizations have been found to have difficulty in getting the information about how they can participate to some audiences.[108]

Information about available programs should be provided in ways that portray them as culturally diverse and welcoming, and promote benefits of participation.[218] Program promoters should use plain language to promote programs, and share information on how to get involved, how to register and about available subsidies, equipment exchange or rebate programs.[117,150,178,175]

Effective communication should be based on the knowledge transfer principles of understanding the target audience, tailoring messages to suit the target audience, using credible messengers, and using effective methods to deliver messages.[98] Program

offerings should be promoted directly to the target audiences in the language of their community,[6,150,261] through preferred channels of communication (e.g., word of mouth, peers, phone, email, text, social media, face-to-face, flyers or brochures) and through community relevant messengers.[163,150,177,163] Messages should be tailored to fit the different priorities, interests and backgrounds of target groups and individuals,[219] identifying the most potent messages, including benefits, opportunities to have fun, to meet new people, to spend time with family, camaraderie, family togetherness, and self-actualization.[150,175,209]

Marketing materials and program write-ups should showcase diversity,[150,220] use promotional language and images that are attractive to a wide variety of participants,[55,221,223] and use inclusive gender-neutral, non-sexist language and images.[136,249,134,262] Co-creating communications with members of the target audience will help to ensure they reflect that population's perspective, that they feel included in the intent of an activity and that materials are culturally safe and relevant.[222,122,213] Furthermore, promotional materials should be aesthetically pleasing and perceived as relevant by the target population through the use of colours, images, fonts, pictures, etc. that reflect the group's culture; use statistics that relate to their group; and depict realistic portrayals of the sport itself.[82,213,223]

Using Role Models to Encourage Participation

Provision and support of role models can attract participants, enhance their experience, increase relevance, create a more welcoming and accepting environment for participants,[16,78,80,96,116,126,133,149,174,224] and model and teach expected attitudes.[88,225] Role models should be relatable members of the underrepresented group and can include local champions and heroes, family members, teachers, Elders, and other community members, as well as celebrities and elite athletes.[178,175,117,226,55,227,228,229,224]

In general, the most effective role model programs are those that focus on developing a long term, mentor relationship particularly for individuals from socially disadvantaged groups,[224] and empower the role models to help reach out to new participants and tell their stories.[175,150,175] Peer role-models who have a disability and who are already working within sport organizations provide increased visibility of persons with a disability.[105]

Female athletes who act as role models are important to demonstrate that success in sport is attainable and can provide girls the confidence they need to overcome the many challenges of lifelong participation.[66] Female coaches can support girls by providing mentorship and role modeling which, in turn, can help counter stereotypes and boost girls' confidence, self-efficacy, and sense of belonging.[145] Furthermore, it

has been noted that while female role models are important, the encouragement of girls in sport needs to come from both female and male role models (e.g., coaches, teachers, and elite athletes) who understand the emotional, psychosocial and physical changes that girls experience, and the many challenges they face in their continued participation.[66]

However, while role models can be inspirational, they can sometimes be intimidating, which may turn potential participants away from sport if they do not identify with them. For example older adults or others with ability limitations can be intimidated when the role model's abilities do not match what they think they can personally achieve.[142] Similarly, media studies have brought attention to the "supercrip" image which portrays athletes with a disability as heroic within the boundaries of the world of disability.[230] Peer role models may be most effective at engaging inactive adults with a disability, while Paralympians may be more relevant to children and young people.[105]

Ensuring Representation

Sport participants from diverse backgrounds are more likely to feel included when they see people like them represented across the organization. Organizations should work to ensure diversity in leadership, coaching staff, officials and other staff[188] through recruitment, hiring and training, and mentorship practices;[3,188,150,5,231] to ensure gender balance on boards,[56,55,195,5] and among coaches, technical officials and other leaders;[5,18] and to ensure Indigenous mentors and staff in programming for Indigenous participants.[193]

A high proportion of women in various positions helps to ensure a range of programs that are suitable for women, increase enrolment and retention of female athletes and officials,[232,233] can improve attitudes toward inclusion,[214,233] and reduce the severity of organizational problems.[232]

Encouraging Public Awareness and Positive Media Portrayals

Public awareness and acceptance of the importance of inclusion is an important part of ensuring positive experiences in sport for members of underrepresented groups. Generating appropriate positive media coverage, that shows members of underrepresented groups participating in sport and enjoying themselves, will both promote that these experiences welcome all members of the community and promote public acceptance of that participation.[234]

Campaigns can focus on:

- promoting equality,[262] addressing stereotypes[262] and reducing stigma;[90]

- raising awareness of the need for inclusive environments;[102]

- raising awareness about violence and harassment in sport;[262]

- 'normalising' activity for persons with a disability,[96] providing an opportunity for persons with a disability to see others like them participating and for the mainstream public to see them as participants,[96] and promoting a holistic view of their participation beyond the Paralympic 'superhuman' participation levels;[90,235]

- highlighting the positive, life-long impacts of participation of girls and women in sport and physical activity,[236] and ensuring greater visibility of female athletes' achievements and women's sports by increasing the percentage of media content devoted to female sport.[1,237]

A great deal of literature has focused on the media exposure and attention afforded girls and women in sport. The media can play a significant role in either reinforcing or challenging gender stereotypes in sports[65] and in ensuring equal, quality, coverage that focuses on the athletic achievement of women and girls, and participation of women in girls as the norm, rather than their perpetuating harmful stereotypes.[65,66,68,67] Furthermore, women's participation in a broad range of sports

should be profiled, rather than those considered 'suitable' for women.[68] Quality exposure can lead to increased participation rates and also help female athletes attract corporate sponsorship.[66]

Media visibility of athletes with a disability has been found to be higher for elite athletes, domestic athletes and certain types of disability. Images of disability are minimized, and certain types of disabilities are favored and, although there is focus on athleticism, it is underpinned by a "supercrip" narrative and a medicalised description of disability.[235] Furthermore, there appears to be limited media coverage of Paralympic sport between Paralympic Games making it difficult to sustain momentum.[105] While there is no evidence that the Paralympic movement increases participation among individuals with a disability, it has been shown to positively affect attitudes of general public of people with a disability.[238]

Promoting Social Engagement and Fun

Sport provides a type of 'social glue' that contributes to 'increasing social connectedness and a sense of belonging.[178]

It provides opportunities to strengthen community and social ties[35] and bring communities together to be active in cultural or social activities,[222] which improves the sense of belongingness. Early and consistent participation helps to develop abilities required to address skill level, belonging, and cultural capital needed for inclusion.[126]

Support for sport participation from family, partners, health professionals, peers and friends can encourage participation.[16,88,174,239,240,175,72,163,151,96] Opportunities for intergenerational and whole family participation[4,88,173] are appropriate to many cultures, provide alternatives to providing separate activities or care for other family members, and provide support and encouragement for participation. Provision of programming for other family members at the same time, such as child care, or sport or recreation activities at minimal cost, can address the barriers related to family caring responsibilities and leverage the desire for family time.[173,218,55,110,120,88,174]

Involving Indigenous Elders in supporting sporting opportunities can enable sharing of knowledge from generation to generation including understandings of movement and traditional sports and games, assist in the revitalization of traditional games, sports, and activities, support spiritual aspects, enhance cultural experiences, and provide opportunities for community members to develop social ties and bonds[159,35]

Adolescent girls' participation is influenced by its social aspects, such as the welcoming environment, the friendliness of people within a club, knowing someone at a club, having a buddy to participate with, and friendliness of the coach.[241] Participation with friends can provide non-judgemental, bonding opportunities that can increase confidence, reduce the seriousness of sports, enable knowledge sharing, and provide mutual support to work together and begin to advocate for themselves and others.[74] For example, curling clubs have been found to play an important role in the lives of rural women and girls by strengthening social connections, facilitating physical and mental health, supporting and strengthening rural life, and serve as a key source of social capital.[242]

Youth engagement and retention can be increased though the creation of a sense of belonging within their peer group, forming trusting relationships with staff, and opportunities to take on leadership roles and new responsibilities.[115]

The social interaction associated with physical activity conducted in groups or group participation and incorporating existing friend and peer networks can facilitate participation by older people, and persons with a disability, as it can provide purpose and avoid social isolation[243,96,244] Pairing novice participants with those with more experience or more advanced skills is another way to provide social interaction, break down barriers and provide special assistance.[245]

Setting a Welcoming Tone

All members of the sport community should be tasked with ensuring that members of underrepresented groups feel welcome to participate.[186,239] Older adults have noted that positive social interaction in a fun and enjoyable physical activity, in a manner which is safe, supportive, energizing, confidence-building, and attainable supports their participation.[209,246] Young people with a disability have reported that supportive teammates and coaches or instructors who are familiar with, and understand, different diagnoses encourage them to be active and to feel part of the team.[97]

Administrators, coaches, front desk staff and volunteers are among the people that set the tone of the sport participation experience and inclusivity. To ensure a positive environment, staff at all levels should be supportive, culturally competent, inclusive, relatable, likeable, attentive, and respectful, and look for ways to create a social and supportive space, build positive relationships and experiences with participants and their supporters.[247,1,204,212,80] Furthermore, they should denounce inappropriate language, discrimination, harassment and bullying.[134,248,249,250] Organizations need to institute and regularly promote clear policies and processes that address discrimination, vilification prejudicial or discriminatory language/behaviour and harassment,[251] and their staff should seizing teachable moments and regularly talk to

athletes about openness, respect, fairness, diversity and acceptance, and using inclusive language.[134,252,249,175]

Tying social activities to sport opportunities can support a welcoming atmosphere. For example, offering food in general, and traditional foods when appropriate, provide opportunities where everyone can learn about one another's cultures and ensures both a social and cultural component, as well as ensuring that athletes are sufficiently nourished to participate.[4,8,149,35,50]

Above all, programmers should set the goal to have fun, supporting a sport environment that is welcoming, nonjudgmental and diverse, instills a sense of belonging, equality and security,[1,74,204,152,72,96,126,150,246,175] encourages participation with friends[72,74,117,145,164,204] and social interaction with coaches,[204] and balances an emphasis on winning with that of fun and skill development.[145]

Other Actions to Support Inclusivity in Sport

Training for Inclusion

Training can help alleviate fears some people may have about addressing diversity[4] and help leaders explore the meaning and impact of cultural diversity.[253] It will enable them to better offer a positive

sporting experience, free of discrimination and to navigate issues of inclusion in sports.[132,136] To create an inclusive, welcoming environment, instructors, coaches, physical education teachers and parents will benefit from training on:[3,11,55,96,100,134,137,150,245,249,254,255,256,268,257,258,259]

- cultural competency[*] and cultural safety;

- how to ensure access;

- how to adapt lessons and activities;

- how to use modified equipment;

- ways to support integration and participation;

- ways to address harassment, stereotyping, bullying and violence; and

- coaching approaches that are applicable to each of the populations.

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[*] Cultural competency refers to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for providing quality service to diverse populations. This involves knowing one's own biases, understanding the sociocultural aspects of participation, and effective communication skills.

Practitioners have also expressed a need for training in ways to promote positive attitudes towards disability and parasport.[148]

If they work with older adults, their education should include information about arthritis, heart conditions, osteoporosis and injury prevention, and adapting programming to address associated needs, skill levels, and desired levels of contact and exertion.[138] Finally, diversity and inclusion in sport will be improved by promotion of understanding, demonstration and implementation of the principles of True Sport,[175] and courses such as Respect in Sport, which helps people recognize, understand, and respond to issues of bullying, abuse, harassment, and discrimination in sport.[150]

Policy Initiatives to Promote Sport Participation

Along with addressing barriers, examining ways to increase mastery and creating a sense of engagement, meaning and belongingness, there are other actions that policy makers and other stakeholders may want to consider in promoting sport participation among underrepresented groups.

Policy makers and sports organizations could consider:

- Creating and promoting equality and inclusivity action plans;[260,262,261]

- Examining and challenging the various ways sport privileges a few young people over a great many others by providing

and funding ongoing programming that consistently improves skills and confidence;[103]

- Framing policies and practices from an inclusion-first perspective that affirms and encourages individuals to participate in sport rather than feeling marginalized or unwelcome;[136]

- Adopting, implementing, communicating and monitoring clear policies (e.g., zero tolerance) and measures, to prevent and combat discrimination, bullying, harassment, gender-based and other violence, sexism, abuse, racism, and homophobia in sport environments,[5,150,262,251,261,247] and ensuring that all participants, their families and spectators are aware of codes of conduct and behaviour expectations;[261]

- Ensuring policies governing participation nurture fair play, honesty and respect, preserve the integrity of sport, embrace diversity, foster access and equitable participation for all participants, offer a positive sporting experience, free of

discrimination, be evidence-based, recognize the necessity to protect the privacy rights of athletes, and strive to prevent physical, emotional and mental harm;[136]

- Using infrastructure policies, bylaws and guidelines to ensure facilities are planned, designed, and managed in ways that ensure safety, affordability, and accessibility;[262]

- Advocating for guidelines that counter negative stereotypes and increase equity of sport representation in the media;[66,262]

- Exploring ways to balance time allocations at facilities for boys' and girls' sports;[66,1]

- Establishing a recognition platform to incentivize corporate Canada's long-term support (e.g., financial contributions, promotion and in-kind donations) of women in sport;[66]

- Introducing gender (and other group) mainstreaming requirements and approaches into laws, policies, funding agreements, program evaluation and the like;[262]

- Ensuring appropriate representation in decision making bodies;[262]

- Ensuring policies address systemic transportation, financial, access and scheduling barriers;[96,55,188]

- Encouraging, funding and implementing intersectoral and interdepartmental collaboration;[263] and

- Engaging members of underrepresented groups in policy development to ensure inclusion of culturally informed ideas about sport.[189,35,16]

Identify and Share Successful Practices

Among Canadian communities with populations of more than 1,000 residents, 79% consider information regarding ways to inspire Canadians to be more active would be useful, 60% would like to have information on successful promotion campaigns in other jurisdictions and 54% would like to have information on evidence-based recommendations on how to address barriers.[264] While these statistics refer to physical activity more generally, the appetite for this information for sport is likely similar.

In addition to the practices identified in this literature review, there are many policy decisions being made and programs being implemented that are not published and have therefore not been identified. A Canadian environmental scan of programs and policies at the federal, provincial/territorial and municipal levels would help to identify policies, programs, and activities being undertaken and gather success and lessons learned. The findings from this work could then be assembled into an online repository to share with others across the country. Similarly, identifying and sharing successfully implemented policies and practices from around the world would enhance this knowledge base. Regular updating of this review and any environmental scans, along with

opportunities for practitioners to share their successes would keep such a resource current and relevant.

There are many excellent Canadian publications that address ways to support physical activity and sport in underrepresented groups that have been referred to in this report (e.g., CAAWS' Leading the Way: Working with LGBT Athletes and Coaches). These reports contain much more detail than provided here. These resources also need ongoing broad dissemination and promotion as their recommendations are valuable and valid.

There is an opportunity to strengthen connections between the *Canadian Sport Policy*, *A Common Vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living: Let's Get Moving* and *The Framework for Recreation in Canada*. The three policy/strategy documents describe several similar actions and recommendations that, with support for coordination, could have a great impact in joint implementation.

There have been several opportunities identified for action by inter-sectoral, cross-professional partnerships in this report. This should be a priority both locally and among and between all jurisdictions. In addition to the joint implementation of the three policy documents noted above, there are opportunities for such groups to work on many initiatives and build one upon another. Bringing leaders (researchers, policy makers, practitioners, members of these groups, and others) together in long term steering/advisory committees or

Communities of Practice would provide an opportunity to learn from each other and co-create tools, resources and action plans, and support their dissemination and implementation.

Supporting program and policy developers in sharing and promoting their successes and key learnings would further increase the efficacy in promoting sport participation. Promotion can include posting prominently on websites (including cross promotion with partners) and discussions via social media. Holding webinars, which then are archived online for later reference, are also useful. Support could additionally take the form of toolkits or templates for sharing successful practices in a consistent written format or providing script guidelines for video presentations of these practices. However, to truly gain momentum, and generate discussion, ongoing knowledge brokering from some of the key players is needed. Knowledge Brokers/Capacity Builders can ensure active involvement of the material with stakeholders and co-create tools and resources that will assist knowledge dissemination and capacity building.

Disseminate These Findings, Gather Feedback and Keep them Current

Wide dissemination of and consultation on this report, to build upon the initial list of ideas for action, should be considered. Grass roots consultation will be important to both validate the findings and solicit additional ideas from practitioners from across the country, including, and most

importantly, from members of the underrepresented groups themselves. Dissemination vehicles, channels and messages should be tailored to the target audience (i.e., policy makers, sport, recreation and physical activity promoters, members of underrepresented groups, and non-traditional community partners). The supplements to this report each provide ideas for action for these various audiences.

Implementation

Many of the issues and recommendations of many reports have been in existence for quite some time but there are no mechanisms in place to actively fund and support them. It is time to start examining ways to assist the sector to implement these evidence-based recommendations. A long-term commitment is needed to fund, support and build sustainable system capacity in partnership with cross sector, interdisciplinary stakeholders, including all levels of government, sport organizations, non-governmental organizations and members of underrepresented groups.

Evaluation and Monitoring

Efforts to implement actions to increase sport participation among members of underrepresented groups should be monitored and evaluated. Evaluation and research are needed to discover not only whether programs work, but also to understand the successful mechanisms and characteristics of interventions that are effective or ineffective under particular conditions; produce knowledge; build

theory; improve future practice, provide opportunities to learn and make course corrections; and to understand success and failure.[265,266,267,268] Monitoring and evaluation efforts should be theory-driven, participatory, holistic, and strategic process-led approaches to provide the basis for capacity building, greater ownership, understanding, integration, and improved program delivery.[269,270,271] Program evaluation strategies could take on elements of Collective Impact, RE-AIM and other proven strategies[276] and could consider measuring such things as:

- Intersectoral collaboration implementation and successes[272,263,273] and the cross-sectoral impact of interventions.[274,273]

- The extent gender equity is considered when evaluating sport organizations.[275]

- The extent to which participants report engagement, belongingness, meaning, and mastery; numbers of new registrants and retention of existing registrants; organizational attitudes and change; level of engagement with other community partners;[276] and feedback on inclusion efforts and cultural sensitivity.[250]

Conclusion

Canada provides some of the best sport and recreation opportunities in the world. One way to make the sport sector even stronger is to ensure that it provides opportunities for more members of underrepresented groups to participate, as they have experienced marginalization in various parts of their lives, including sport. Indeed, the love of sport and a passion for playing it have the potential to unite participants from diverse backgrounds.

This review presents an overview of current literature and ideas to improve access and inclusion for members of underrepresented groups. While these groups are diverse, there are many similarities in terms of the barriers and challenges to their participation in sport. Most importantly, the very nature of their marginalization from mainstream sport participation creates a vicious cycle of exclusion, as low levels of physical literacy and cultural capital place their abilities below those of their peers and result in further exclusion. Many conclude that sport is 'not their thing.'

Providing opportunities to gain basic skills to people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds, whether it is their desire to become accomplished athletes or just to feel comfortable playing with their peers, is paramount to ensuring they consider sport as an option. To encourage participation at all levels, there is a need for sport leaders and organizations to support the delivery of fun, socially inclusive sport programs that support a healthy active lifestyle for all. It is

important to understand, acknowledge and honour reasons for sport participation and not to enforce athletic development standards on those who are not looking for that type or experience. Accommodating all levels of skill and competition, supporting choice of participation level and offering a variety of sports ensures meeting the needs of many different individuals.

As well as supporting individual choice, it is imperative that policy makers and practitioners work with members of each target group they are hoping to serve, to gain an understanding of their culture, challenges and preferred solutions, and then tailoring those solutions to the local context. Some of the cross-cutting actions that address increasing participation for members of any group include:
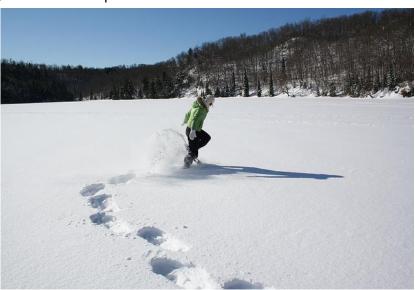
- Developing programs to introduce basic skills and improve physical literacy for all ages, abilities and skill levels;

- Creating a welcoming environment and ensuring that experiences are positive, encouraging, safe and fun;

- Offering a variety of types, levels and modifications of sport programming to meet the interests and needs of a broad range of potential participants;

- Celebrating diversity and ensuring that sport participation experiences are inclusive, non-judgemental, and free of harassment and inappropriate language;

- Encouraging support networks and social interaction and prioritizing fun;

- Honouring and supporting participant choices regarding type and level of involvement, level of competition and scheduling;

- Increasing access to sport by opening many types of buildings and facilities, ensuring physical and operational access;

- Ensuring facilities are maintained, accessible and meet the privacy and cultural needs of participants;

- Working with intersectoral and non-sport community partners, organizations and participants to ensure that programming meets the needs of the community and that promotion efforts are accessible and relevant;

- Providing professional development and mentorship opportunities to coaches, leaders, teachers and administrators;

- Encouraging peer leadership and mentorship;

- Removing transportation, equipment, registration and other access barriers;

- Attracting participants with broader social and cultural experiences in addition to the sporting experience;

- Ensuring equity in media representation of a diversity of Canadians and that avoids stereotypes;

- Celebrating and promoting diversity and working from a mindset of inclusion; and

- Ensuring policy supports these goals.

There is ample academic and gray literature describing the barriers to participation and solutions. There are also likely many great programs underway and policy activity across Canada that has not been published. Now is the time to find ways to share the solutions broadly and support their implementation.

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