

INSTITUTE FOR
CANADIAN
CITIZENSHIP



INSTITUT POUR LA
CITOYENNETÉ
CANADIENNE

PLAYING TOGETHER

new citizens, sports
& belonging



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A SPORT IS A SPORT
A FAN IS A FAN

A sport is a sport and a fan is a fan, no matter where in this world you were born.

The Institute for Canadian Citizenship is a non-profit organization that believes Canada is at its best when new citizens feel welcomed and included as full participants in the economic, political, social and cultural fabric of our country.

As Canada's demographic composition continues to change through immigration, sports represent familiar, safe spaces to interact with new people. By playing together, we build connections, community and, ultimately, our country.

We embarked upon this study to understand:

- how playing together builds a stronger Canada;
- if and how sports organizations are engaging new citizens; and
- new citizens' experiences playing and watching sports in Canada.

A new story of integration and belonging emerged. New citizens told us that participating in sports is a fantastic way to find your place in Canada. The social interaction around playing or watching sports – at any level and with anyone – is more comfortable than in formal settings such as the workplace. We heard wonderful stories of new citizens making their first “Canadian friend” through sports.

We also learned that Canadians need to re-think what, how and where we communicate about sports. Finding opportunities to play together can be a challenge.

New citizens shared their frustrations trying to navigate Canada's highly structured systems of play that require intuitive knowledge.

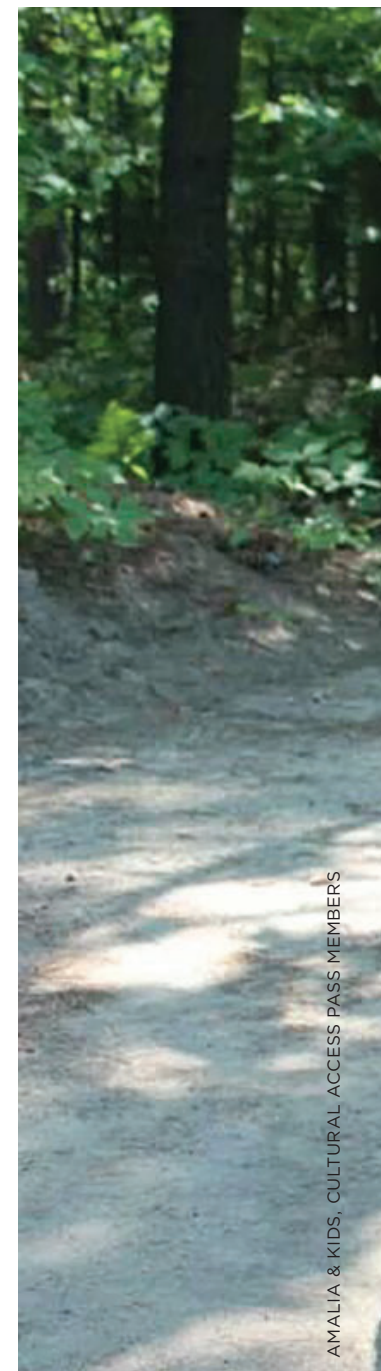
New citizens were also dismayed to find that pickup sports played widely around the world – basketball, soccer and even badminton – aren't so easy to pick up in Canada; often organized in regimented leagues, requiring facilities and insurance just to play, or available mainly through expensive private clubs.

We learned too that sports organizations would love to include new citizens, and many have made great and innovative strides in their outreach efforts. But the reality for many is that they operate on shoestring budgets, often relying on volunteers. The challenge of branching out to new potential players – and the fear of unintentionally offending another community – looms large.

Successful integration doesn't rely solely on organizations and associations. It relies on the kindness and thoughtfulness of those Canadians who, seeing a new parent on the sidelines of a game, walk over and say hello. It relies on removing the assumption that everyone knows how it's done.

Canada's bench strength is our ability to play together.

GILLIAN SMITH, Institute for Canadian Citizenship
Executive Director & CEO





Playing together - new citizens, sports & belonging is a national study that explores how new citizens participate in Canada's sporting culture. It combines findings from interviews with Canada's top sports organizations and associations, a national online survey with more than 4,000 new citizens, as well as real-life experiences of new citizens shared at cross-Canada focus groups. This study illuminates how sports can help new citizens successfully integrate into Canadian life, and shares how Canada's sports organizations can more effectively engage new Canadians as participants and fans. *Playing together* is unique because of who we're talking to and what we're talking about.

THANK YOU!

A first for Canada, this study was made possible through the generous support of Bouygues Building Canada and Doug & Lois Mitchell.



THE NEW CANADIAN ROSTER

New citizens and why they matter



**“SPORT IS MORE OF
A CULTURE THAN A
HOBBY HERE. IT’S A
PART OF LIFE.”**

New citizen, Toronto focus group



LEFT TO RIGHT: ROMIT & RITU, EVIN & EMRE, NIG, JEN, ALEXANDER, JOSE, ALL CULTURAL ACCESS PASS MEMBERS

A NEW CITIZEN IS NOT A NEWCOMER OR NEW CANADIAN

Although the distinction between these two groups may be minor, its implications are not. New citizens are immigrants who have been in Canada for at least three years (usually five to six) and have attained Canadian citizenship. The new citizens who participated in this study are like many of the country's newest citizens:



LIFESTYLE

In the prime of their lives, building careers and raising families



AGE

Between 25 and 44 years of age



FAMILY

Have children



EDUCATION

Have a university degree



INCOME

Have a household income of less than \$60,000

Starting fresh in a new country takes time. In the first few years, many immigrants are preoccupied with securing basic needs (finding a home, work and getting the kids into school, etc.). But don't assume a few years are enough to achieve full integration. Many continue to struggle to find their place in Canada well after they have arrived and made their citizenship official. Participating in this study encouraged new citizens to reflect on their current experiences and attitudes, and on the years leading up to their citizenship as newcomers/new Canadians.

WHY CARE ABOUT THIS STUDY AND ITS FINDINGS?

Immigration is – and will continue to be – central to Canada's future. By 2030, it will account for all of Canada's net population growth. Cities across Canada – large and small – are being transformed by immigration, and these demographic trends will undoubtedly impact Canadian sports.

Traditionally popular sports may see participation levels drop, while new sports – cricket, table tennis and badminton – will grow. Both grassroots and professional sports organizations need to find ways to appeal to this diverse new audience.

Playing together is a distinctive glimpse into a new audience, plus firsthand accounts from new Canadian citizens across the country – a group that has chosen Canada and simply wants an invitation to play.

4,000

NEW CANADIAN
CITIZEN
PARTICIPANTS







STUDY 101

Playing together - new citizens, sports & belonging

PLAYING TOGETHER – NEW CITIZENS, SPORTS & BELONGING
WAS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

HOW IMPORTANT IS SPORT TO NEW CITIZENS, AND WHAT ROLE DOES IT PLAY IN THEIR DAILY LIVES?

ARE THERE BARRIERS PREVENTING NEW CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN CANADA'S SPORTING CULTURE?

WHAT WOULD ENCOURAGE NEW CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS TO A GREATER EXTENT THAN CURRENT LEVELS?

DOES PARTICIPATION IN CERTAIN SPORTS HELP CULTIVATE A SENSE OF CANADIAN IDENTITY? CONVERSELY, DOES A LACK OF PARTICIPATION REINFORCE A SENSE OF EXCLUSION FROM FEELING CANADIAN?

TO WHAT EXTENT DOES PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF NEW CITIZENS?

WHAT CAN SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS DO TO MORE EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE NEW CITIZENS?

THESE QUESTIONS WERE EXPLORED OVER THREE PHASES:

1. Environmental scan

Informal telephone interviews were conducted with 21 sports organizations across Canada. Two types of organizations were targeted: those that govern individual sports and the umbrella organizations (largely geographically focused) that advocate for sport more generally.

3. Cross-country focus groups

- Calgary
- Mississauga
- Montreal
- Ottawa
- Richmond (BC)
- Toronto
- Vancouver
- Winnipeg

The focus groups consisted of seven to 12 participants, with the exception of Winnipeg (five). Participants were recruited from the survey and through targeted invitations. Although they represent a diverse mix, the focus groups tended to attract participants who already had a strong interest in sports.

2. National online survey

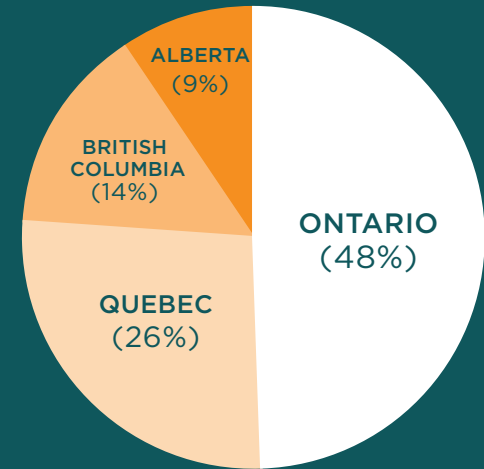
More than 4,000 new citizens responded to a 20-minute online survey*. The respondents were drawn from the Institute for Canadian Citizenship's Cultural Access Pass program.



*3,020 new citizens completed the survey. Analysis also includes partial completions.

OUR NEW CITIZEN PARTICIPANTS

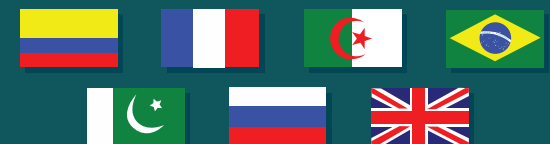
63% of survey respondents have lived in Canada for five to seven years. The survey was sent to new citizens residing in urban areas. The majority live in the following provinces:



Participants' cultural backgrounds mirror the top source countries of Canadian immigrants:



COLOMBIA, FRANCE, ALGERIA, BRAZIL, PAKISTAN, RUSSIA and the UNITED KINGDOM round out the remaining top countries.





STUCK ON THE SIDELINES

Barriers to new citizens' sports participation

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION ARE UNIVERSAL

The top barriers to participation, whether for newcomers or new citizens, are familiar to almost all Canadians:



THE GOOD NEWS...

The challenges presented in the study are nothing to fear – we’re not dealing with systemic cultural issues. Barriers are primarily structural challenges that can be solved. Only **24% of survey respondents have no interest in participating**, and only **19% did not feel welcome**.

BARRIERS UNIQUE TO NEW CITIZENS



NO ONE TO
PLAY WITH



NO
OPPORTUNITIES



NO APPROPRIATE
SKILL LEVEL



NO
INTEREST



DID NOT FEEL
WELCOME

DIVING DEEPER

The new citizens in our study identified other barriers during the focus group discussions:

Not enough funds to go around; it’s hard to just go out and play

Access to sports in Canada often means you have to *pay to play*. As new Canadians struggle to make it here, it’s very difficult to find the time and money to participate. Overall, study participants felt Canada has

a good system of parks and other outdoor community spaces where you can play for free. But they pointed out these spaces are only usable for certain (warmer) months.

“[We] had a lot of free, publicly available space to play any sport... we had designated basketball courts, skating rinks, we had cricket fields... soccer fields. Here, you have to go indoors because the winter is there for six, seven months in a year, and then... it is not free.”

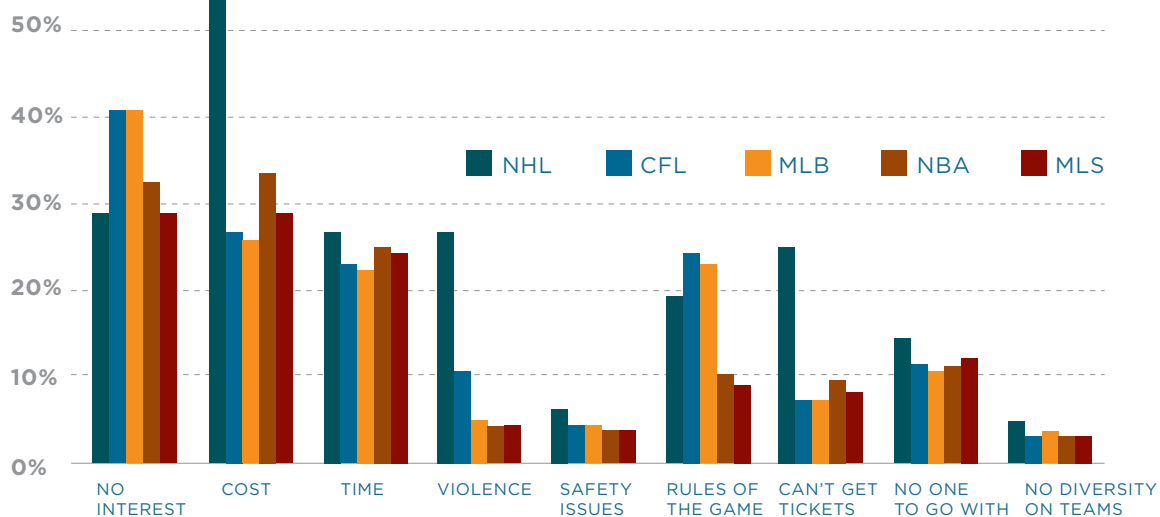
It’s hard to follow the play when you don’t know the rules

About a quarter of our survey respondents said they don’t follow traditional sports – baseball and football – because they aren’t familiar with the rules; hockey isn’t far behind. Even the most avid sports fans would be bored watching a game they don’t understand.

“I tried to read up on [football] when I came here, but I still find it difficult, to be honest.”

BARRIERS TO WATCHING

The same is true when asked what keeps new citizens from watching the following Canadian sports:



Learning as an adult is hard enough before you add snow and ice to the mix!

As adults, new citizens feel the chance to learn new sports has passed them by; they are not particularly keen to learn surrounded by children. Winter sports can be intimidating, require considerable investment and are hard to “try” before committing to lessons.

“I’m afraid of skiing. I see myself on top of the hill and think, ‘I have to go down this hill?’ No. I wouldn’t.”

Lack of information

It is quite possible many of these barriers are more a matter of perception, and new citizens simply lack the information other Canadians grow up with. While **67%** of the survey respondents reported they **did not have difficulties finding sports information** in the first few years of living in Canada, lack of clear information was a persistent theme across all focus groups.



HOW SOME ARE RESPONDING

Although many newcomers excitedly find their way into Canadian sporting culture, the barriers to participation are causing others to turn away from the mainstream and create their own teams.

In Winnipeg – a relatively small Canadian city with low levels of immigration (compared to Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver) – there are five Filipino basketball leagues, and most of the players are recent immigrants.

Parallel structures shouldn’t exist. Work needs to be done now to ensure newcomers feel they have a welcome place in our mainstream sporting culture before the divide becomes too deep. We play better together.





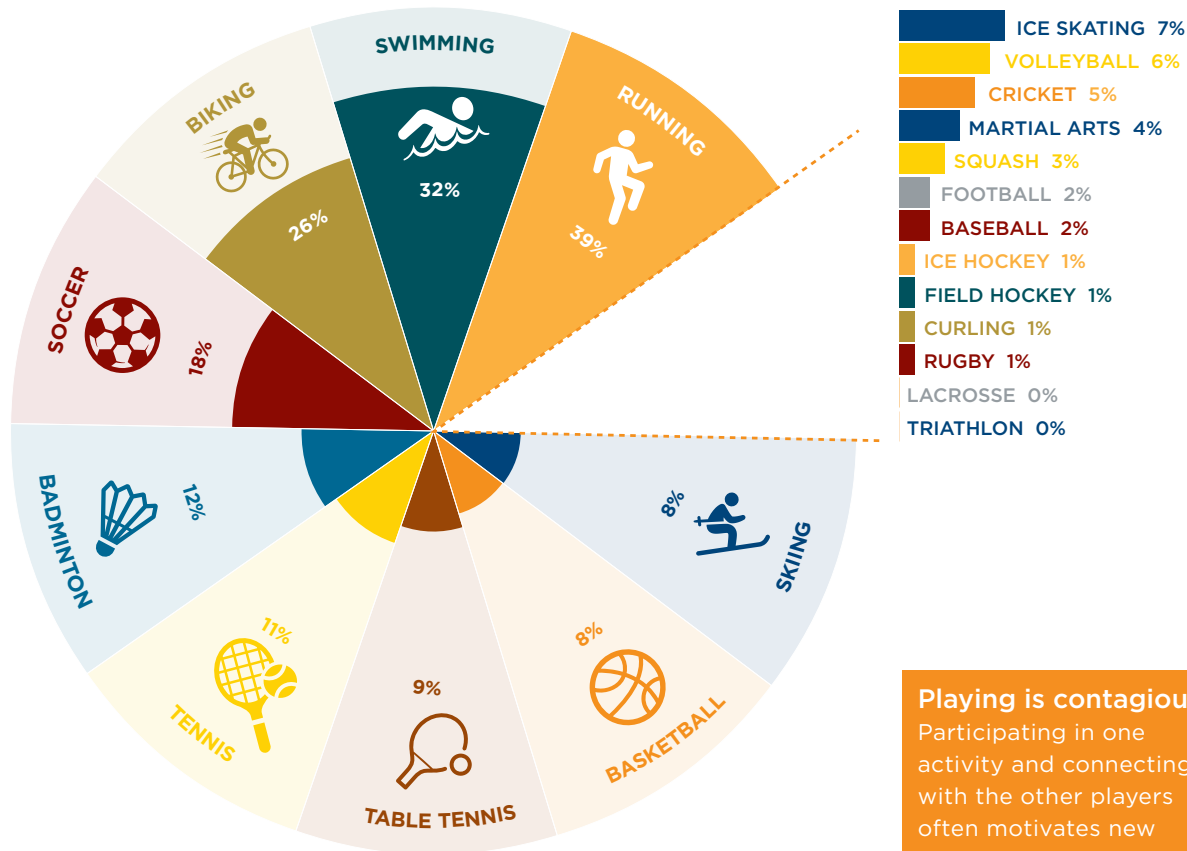
FINE-TUNING THE LINEUP

How new citizens play and
watch sports in Canada

THE NEW CITIZEN PARTICIPANT

Similar to the rest of the country, newcomers and new citizens are more attracted to activities classified as “active leisure” than organized sports; they’re easy to do alone or with family, and are relatively inexpensive.

This chart outlines the sports new citizens play in Canada.



Playing is contagious!
Participating in one activity and connecting with the other players often motivates new citizens to join additional sports, try new (winter) sports or play more competitively (for those looking to do so).

KIDS' PARTICIPATION

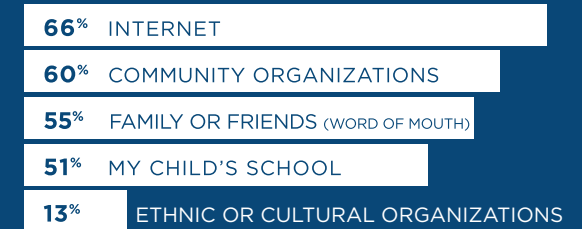
Kids are often what motivates new citizens to get involved in Canadian sporting culture. **44% of our survey respondents have children who play sports**, and almost all believe playing sports is important (primarily to keep kids active and healthy).

The most popular organized* sports are swimming, soccer, ice skating, basketball, gymnastics and martial arts. **Only 6% have children in mainstream Canadian sports (hockey or baseball/softball).**

Registration is a major barrier to kids' participation

Parents want their kids to play, but don't always know how to get them involved. Being new to the country often means being new to the ins and outs of Canada's sporting culture for kids. Many turn to established Canadians for help.

Where new citizen parents find information on how to access kids' sports:

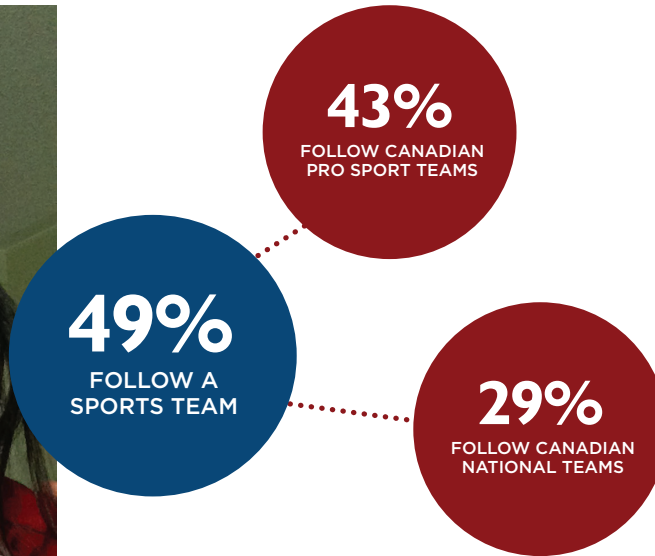


* Organized sports are defined as belonging to a team or taking lessons in and outside of school.

THE NEW CITIZEN FAN

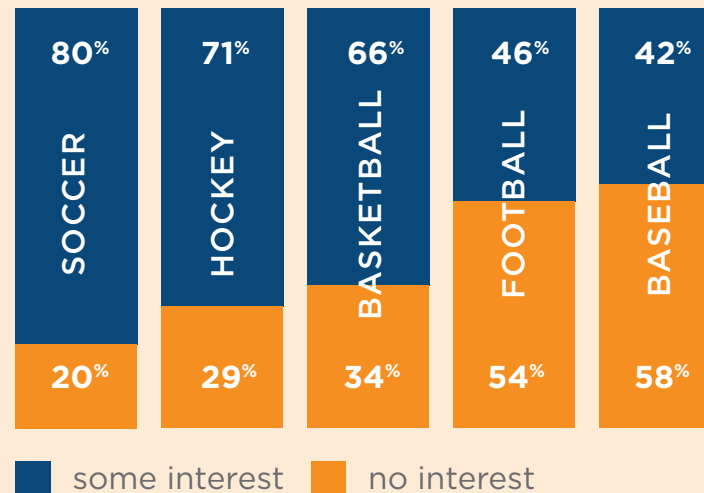


LIAN & DAUGHTER, CULTURAL ACCESS PASS MEMBERS



We asked new citizens about their interest in Canada's professional sports. Not surprisingly, soccer is the overwhelming favourite - this likely relates more to international soccer than MLS.

Here's the breakdown:



“WHEN CANADA WINS THE GOLD MEDAL IN OLYMPICS I WAS THE PROUDEST PERSON.”

New citizen, Toronto focus group

New citizens love Team Canada!
51% of respondents reported watching the **Winter Olympics** and 54% watch the **Summer Olympics** every time they happen.

**“I TRY TO GET INTO
IT, BUT THE OVERALL
PERCEPTION OF SPORTS IS
JUST HOCKEY-ORIENTED,
SO IF I AM NON-HOCKEY,
THEN I AM NOWHERE...”**

New citizen, Toronto focus group





DROPPING THE PUCK?

New citizens' connection to
Canada's traditional sports

THE HOCKEY CONNECTION

Not surprisingly, hockey is recognized as Canada's most iconic sport. Only **34% of survey respondents reported never watching a hockey game** on television. New citizens have a collective appreciation and enthusiasm for hockey as a unifier. Although we didn't hear outright about feelings of exclusion linked to hockey, it was clear new citizens quickly recognize how difficult social interactions can be without having some hockey sense. Many focus on learning something about hockey in order to fit in. They joked that you "score points" with Canadians if you learn enough to pretend like you know what you are talking about.

Lack of diversity on professional teams did not appear to be an issue for our survey respondents. However, when asked what keeps them from watching professional sports, respondents ranked the lack of diversity in hockey slightly higher.

"I FEEL MORE CANADIAN BECAUSE I KNOW ABOUT HOCKEY. IF I DIDN'T KNOW AS MUCH, I WOULD FEEL LESS CANADIAN."

New citizen, Vancouver focus group

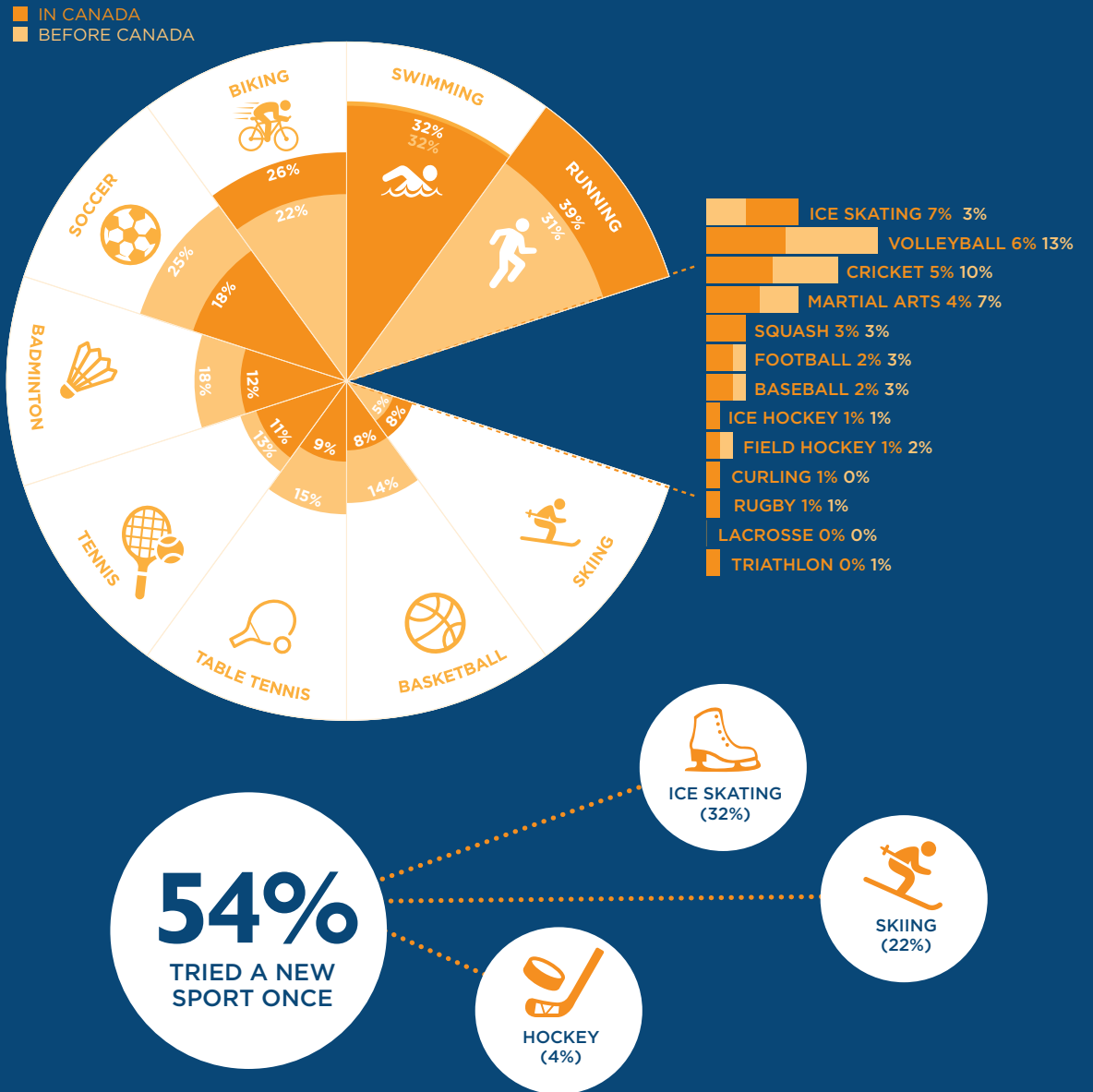


LEFT TO RIGHT: BC HOCKEY, FREEZE FRAME PHOTOGRAPHY; ANDREW, A CULTURAL ACCESS PASS MEMBER



CANADA'S "NEW" CANADIAN SPORTS

Increased immigration levels have benefited some Canadian sports, but the sports new citizens regularly participate in are those they played before coming to Canada. This chart compares sports new citizens played before immigrating to Canada with what they play now.



FIRST PICK

Sports as a mechanism for inclusion

95%

of new citizen respondents agree that sports are an important part of Canadian culture

“CANADIANS ACT MORE OPENLY, NATURALLY AND WITH LESS RESERVATION IN SPORTS THAN THEY WOULD IN THE OFFICE ENVIRONMENT.”

New citizen survey respondent



LEFT TO RIGHT: RAÚL, ALEXANDER, EVIN & EMRE, ALL CULTURAL ACCESS PASS MEMBERS; FAR RIGHT: BADMINTON ALBERTA



SPORTS WELCOME & CONNECT

Sports are a natural, “universal” connection point, more welcoming and better at integrating than many other social structures. More meaningful connections can be made in the stands and on the field than at work.

- **87% feel more connected to their community by watching their kids play or volunteering with the team.**

SPORTS BREAK THE ICE

69% who played sports within their first three years in Canada believe it helped them **learn about Canadian culture**. Study participants also believe sports can teach things not learned in books or online:

- Canadian jargon and slang
- how to handle conflict
- acceptable behaviours or gestures
- the Canadian sense of humour

And more often than not, the conversations initiated through sports lead to deeper discussions about Canadian politics, culture and history.

HOW CANADIAN!

New citizen participants agree that Canadians are generally open and willing to share their sporting passions, making sports participation (for those who enjoy sports) an important way to help new citizens feel more rooted in Canada. New citizens shared stories of Canadians being generous and helpful by:

- offering free tickets to sports events
- inviting them to watch games and taking the time to explain the rules
- helping them understand how to register their kids

PUT ME IN, COACH!

New citizens share recommendations to get them into the game

WHEN IT'S SO HARD TO LEARN HOW THINGS WORK IN CANADA, IT'S A RELIEF TO LEARN HOW EASY PLAYING TOGETHER COULD BE IN THIS COUNTRY.

Go right to the source; don't assume you know what I know, need and want – I'm more than happy to tell you!



- Offer me free tickets
- Share how to get discounted tickets - all the tips and tricks Canadians know
- Develop a tiered pricing structure offering a discount for the first year a sport is played
- Create a tax benefit for adults who play organized sports (like the child tax benefit)
- Create opportunities for me to try winter sports for free
- Go right to the source; don't assume you know what I know, need and want - I'm more than happy to tell you!
- Recruit my community leaders as ambassadors
- Create a Canadian sports welcome package
- Provide a fun booklet at games that introduces me to your team and explains the rules
- Offer locker room tours and meet-the-athlete events

Send professional athletes to my community events and festivals

Help me encourage all Canadians to try a new sport, like cricket



Find creative ways to give me the play-by-play

- Create partnerships with groups already connected to me – settlement organizations, language classes, libraries and community centres
- Send professional athletes to my community events and festivals
- Find creative ways to give me the play-by-play; if I can follow the game, I'm more likely to watch and play
- Help me encourage all Canadians to try a new sport, like cricket, badminton and table tennis

“I WOULD TELL A NEWCOMER, IT’S NOT REALLY A MATTER OF WHAT SPORT YOU GET INTO. THERE’S NO BAD WEATHER, JUST BAD CLOTHING.”
 New citizen, Toronto focus group



LIAN, NEW CITIZEN & KIDS

NEW CITIZENS’ SPORT ADVICE TO NEWCOMERS

- Try something different
- Go to your community centre
- Get involved in soccer as a starting point
- Use social media like MeetUp
- Take advantage of Canada’s geography – mountains, beaches, outdoors, water
- Do something – anything – make the time!



INSTITUTE FOR CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP COMMUNITY CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY, PHOTO BY RENE SEVILLA

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

How to learn more about the study and connect with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship

The Institute for Canadian Citizenship is a non-profit organization focused on accelerating new citizens' integration into Canadian life.

Launched in 2012, ICC Insights is an initiative dedicated to reframing the national conversation on inclusion, identity and citizenship by bringing new citizens' voices to the Canadian mainstream.

Our research is uniquely focused and stands alone in its mission to develop a comprehensive understanding of newcomers' experiences as Canadian citizens – beyond immigration and settlement. ICC Insights works with new citizens who are engaged, active and excited to share their stories.

This study is just the first of many conversations with new citizens we want to bring to light.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE STUDY & READ THE FULL REPORT

visit icc-icc.ca/en/insights or
email connect@icc-icc.ca

You can also join our conversation
on **Twitter: @ICCICC**
#playingtogether The Institute
for Canadian Citizenship is always
looking for more opportunities
to partner and collaborate.

Have an idea you'd like to share?
Email us at connect@icc-icc.ca

