



Sport Participation in Canada

Barriers to Sport Participation

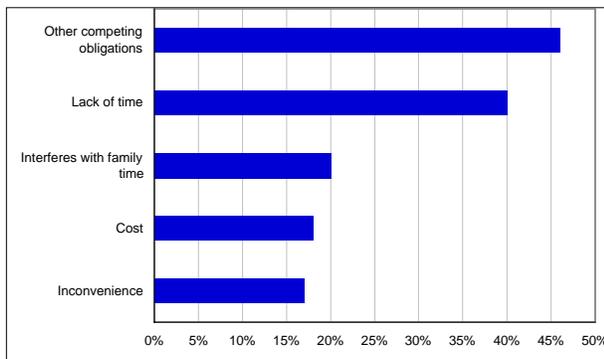
Perceived barriers to physical activity can significantly influence an individual's decision to participate in sport. The 2006-2007 Sport Monitor examined the importance of a number of barriers to sport participation potentially experienced by Canadians who do not participate in sport.

Several barriers to physical activity are reportedly very important to a sizable number of Canadians who do not participate in sport.

Figure 1 illustrates time or financial related barriers, such as:

- Other competing obligations, 46%
- Lack of time, 40%
- Sport takes time away from family, 20%
- Excessive costs, 18%
- Inconvenience, 17%

FIGURE 1: TIME AND COST-RELATED BARRIERS
% rating as very important

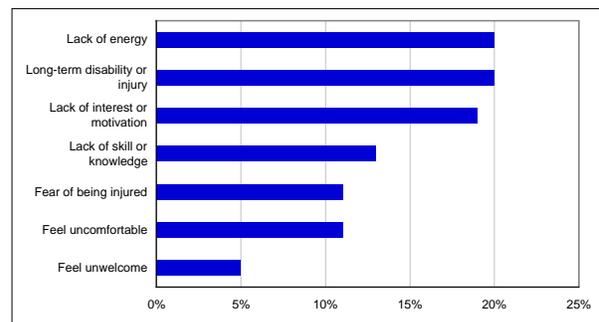


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Figure 2 depicts more personal barriers, including:

- Lack of energy or too tired, 20%
- Long-term disability or injury, 20%
- Lack of interest or motivation, 19%
- Lack of physical skill or knowledge, 13%
- Feeling uncomfortable or ill at ease, 11%
- Fear of injury, 11%
- Not feeling welcome, 5%

FIGURE 2: PERSONAL BARRIERS,
% rating as very important

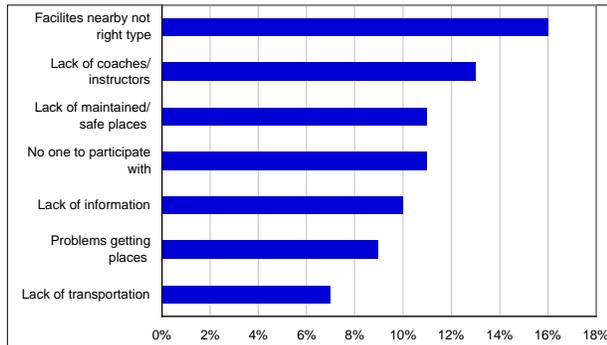


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Figure 3 illustrates barriers pertaining to the physical and social environment, including:

- Not having the right type of facilities nearby, 16%
- Not enough instructors or coaches, 13%
- Too few places that are safe or maintained, 11%
- No one to participate with, 11%
- Lack of information on where and how to participate, 10%
- Difficulty getting to appropriate places, 9%
- Problems with transportation, 7%.

FIGURE 3: BARRIERS RELATED TO THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT
% rating as very important



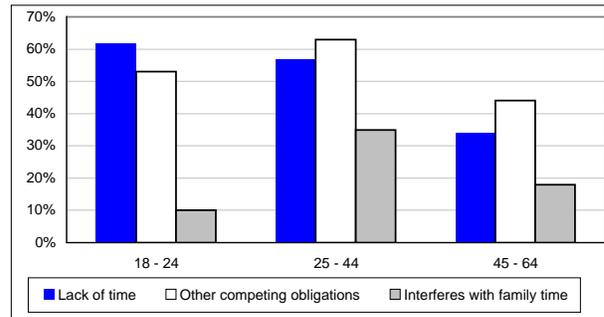
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Of the 5% of non-participating Canadians who report that feeling unwelcome is an important barrier, 34% report that they feel that way because services are only for young people, 31% report that it is because services are for the rich or affluent, and 18% report that it is because services exclude minorities.

Region Few differences exist between the provinces and territories of Canada with respect to perceptions of barriers to sport participation. Albertans are more likely than the average Canadian to state that a lack of time is a very important barrier; however, with respect to all other cited barriers, no significant differences across provinces or territories exist.

Age and sex Among those who do not participate in sport, Canadians aged 25 to 44 years are more likely than the national average to cite other competing obligations as a very important barrier. Similarly, along with 18 to 24 year olds, they are also most likely to cite a lack of time as an impediment to sport. Further, 25 to 44 year old women and men are more likely to say that the negative impact of sport participation on time spent with family is a very important barrier to participating. Older adults (65 years and older) are significantly more likely to report that a lack of time, competing obligations, and the perceived reduction in family time are not important barriers at all in keeping them from participating in sport.

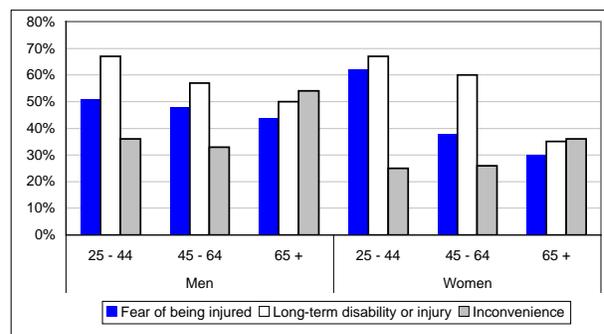
FIGURE 4: SELECT BARRIERS BY AGE
% rating as very important



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Men are more likely than women to say that feeling uncomfortable or ill at ease is not an important barrier. Older men (65 years or older) are more likely than the average Canadian to state that feeling uncomfortable or ill at ease while participating and the perceived inconvenience of participating in sport are not important barriers to their participation in sport. Older adults are more likely to cite existing long-term disabilities or injuries and a fear of new injuries as very important barriers compared to both adults aged 25 to 64 years and the national average, and this is particularly evident among older women.

FIGURE 5: SELECT BARRIERS BY AGE AND SEX
% rating as not at all important



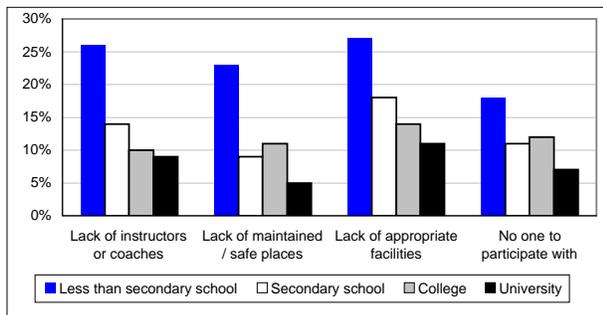
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Canadians aged 45 to 64 years are more likely than 25 to 44 year olds to state that cost is not an important barrier. Young Canadians (aged 18 to 24 years) are most likely to state that transportation issues are a barrier to some degree.

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics

Among those who do not participate in sport, infrastructure and logistic issues present significant barriers to individuals who hold less than secondary education. These individuals are more likely than the average Canadian to say that a lack of safe or maintained places to be active, a lack of program instructors or coaches, problems with transportation, and cost are very important barriers to sport participation. Further, they are also more likely than university-educated Canadians to indicate that both a lack of appropriate facilities nearby and a lack of people with whom to participate are very important impediments to participation, but are less likely than college-educated adults to report that competing obligations act as barriers to sport participation. University-educated adults are more likely than those with less than secondary education to say that feeling unwelcome, feeling uncomfortable or ill at ease while participating, difficulty in getting to places where one can be active, and a lack of information on where or how to participate are not important barriers.

FIGURE 6: SELECT BARRIERS BY EDUCATION
% rating as very important

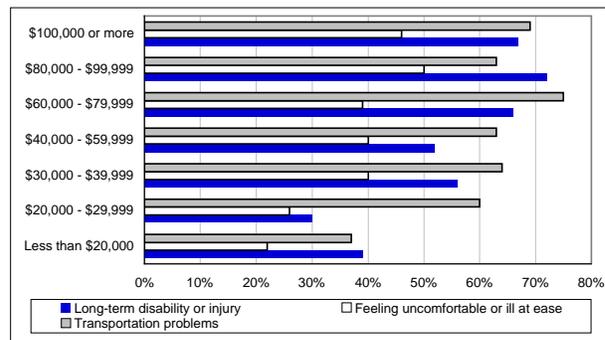


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Among those who do not participate in sport, perceived cost and long-term disabilities or injuries are more likely to be cited as very important barriers to sport participation by the those in the lowest household income group (earning less than \$20,000/year) compared to the average Canadian. Those with higher incomes (with household incomes of

\$100,000/year or greater) are more likely to cite other competing obligations as barriers to participating in sport. Several barriers are more likely to be rated as not important by higher income adults than by those with lower incomes. Long-term injuries or disabilities, transportation issues, and feeling ill at ease are all more frequently reported as not important barriers by higher income Canadians (earning \$80,000/year or more) compared to adults in the lowest household income group (earning less than \$20,000/year).

FIGURE 7: SELECT BARRIERS BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME
% rating as not at all important

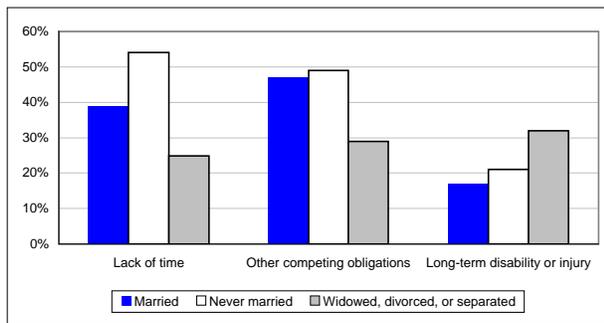


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Widowed, divorced, or separated Canadians are generally least likely to cite a lack of time or other competing obligations as barriers to sport participation; however, these individuals are more likely than married or common-law adults to report that difficulties in getting to places to play sports, a lack of coaches or instructors, and long-term disabilities or injuries are very important barriers. Individuals who have never been married are most likely to cite a lack of time as an important impediment to sport participation, and are also more likely than married or common-law adults to say that a lack of information is a very important barrier. Never-married Canadians are less likely than married adults to cite cost, difficulty getting to places to be active, and a lack of safe and maintained places to participate in sport as important barriers, yet are also less likely than

those who are married or common-law to say that feeling uncomfortable or ill at ease, feeling unwelcome, and a lack of the right kind of facility nearby are not important barriers. Never-married adults are also less likely than the national average to say that a lack of program instructors or coaches is not an important barrier.

FIGURE 8: SELECT BARRIERS BY MARITAL STATUS
% rating as very important



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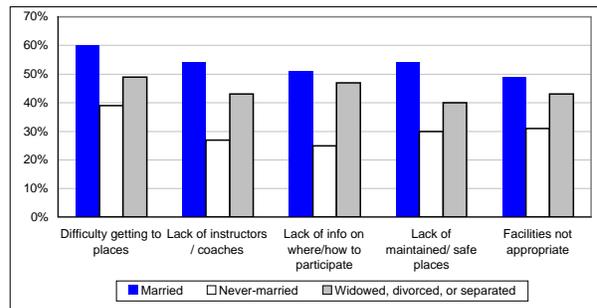
Retired Canadians are more likely than full-time workers to cite existing long-term injuries or disabilities and the fear of suffering an injury as important barriers to sport participation; this may, of course, be related to the older average age of retirees as compared to full-time workers. Canadians employed full-time are more likely than the national average to report that a lack of time hinders participation in sport. Canadians who are retired are more likely than the national average to report that a lack of time, time away from the family, other competing obligations, and a lack of energy are not important barriers at all to their participation in sport. A lack of interest in sport and a lack of energy are more frequently reported as not important at all by retirees compared to full-time workers.

For the most part, perceived barriers to physical activity appear to be equally present equally among different community sizes, with the exception that Canadians who live in communities with populations between 100,000 and 249,999 are more likely than the average Canadian to place no importance at all on the

difficulty incurred in getting to places to play sports or be active.

Activity level Among Canadians who do not participate in sport, perceptions of barriers vary somewhat by activity level. Inactive Canadians are more likely than active Canadians to report that feeling tired or a lack of energy is a very important barrier to sport participation. There are also several barriers which are more likely to be rated as not at all important by active Canadians compared to inactive Canadians: Feeling ill at ease, problems with transportation, the cost of sport participation, difficulty in getting to places at which to participate, and a lack of information about how and where to participate in sport are more likely to not be perceived as important barriers by active adults compared to inactive adults.

FIGURE 9: SELECT BARRIERS BY ACTIVITY LEVEL
% rating as not at all important



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Recommendations for action

Perceived barriers may influence feelings of the amount of control that one has over the choice to be active. In order to help reduce perceived barriers and assist individuals to overcome barriers:

- **Support busy working Canadians** Canada's 2005 General Social Survey shows that the average Canadian now spends significantly more time both at work¹ and commuting to and from work² than in 1992. While the average hours spent at work by full-time workers have declined in recent years, women (and especially mothers) have

experienced significant increases in work time.³ Further, Canadians are experiencing greater difficulty in striking a work-life balance.⁴ More than half of Canadians also report that work has a negative effect on time for leisure activities. The Business Case for Active Living at Work⁵ makes the case for employers and employees to integrate sport and physical activity at workplaces to help to overcome scheduling difficulties. For example, this may include the encouragement of policies related to flexible work hours, telecommuting, and job sharing.

- **Encourage family sport** Cited concerns of loss of family time among Canadians are also related to time restrictions or other obligations. According to the 2005 General Social Survey, employed Canadians have progressively been spending less time with their families over the last few decades.¹ Canadian evidence suggests that other family members of adults and children who are active are more likely to be active themselves.⁶ Taking this into consideration, the Public Health Agency of Canada's Family Guide to Physical Activity for Children⁷ and Family Guide to Physical Activity for Youth⁸ encourage families to make family time more active by participating in organized or casual sport together, rather than passive pursuits such as watching television.
- **Recognize barriers facing older adults** In Canada, roughly one in five older adults participate in sport^{9,10} Older adults who participate in regular physical activity are less likely to face a number of adverse health effects,¹¹ but many seniors perceive several health- and mobility-related barriers to sport participation.¹² Implementation of age-friendly community initiatives (such as those provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada¹³ and the World Health Organization¹⁴) can include sport and

recreation programs for older adults (both age-specific and intergenerational) that consider the potential for health-related concerns, including information on assistive devices that encourage enhanced confidence in abilities to participate in sport.¹⁵

- **Understand barriers for lower income Canadians** Lower income adults are more likely to deem perceived costs and long-term disabilities or injuries as important barriers to participating in sport. Solutions for overcoming cost issues such as discounted or waived registration fees for lower income participants, volunteering time in lieu of payment, and equipment swapping are examples of ways for lower income families to participate in sport. Understanding associated considerations such as access issues or problems with facilities or transportation are also important considerations. For example, national studies have shown that lower income Canadians are less likely to report the availability of many designated physical activity facilities in their local neighbourhoods.¹⁶
- **Provide sport infrastructure** Researchers point out that many efforts to promote physical activity (including sport participation) ignore the location component of overcoming perceived barriers: Without tailoring infrastructure to a particular environment, efforts to encourage Canadians to participate in sport more frequently may prove unsuccessful.¹⁷ Evidence suggests that the provision of relevant activity facilities substantially improves participation among residents; proximity to these facilities is highly related to use. Effective encouragement of sport participation through sport infrastructure must include evaluations of the human geography of target populations. Adaptations in construction and maintenance which are informed by future users and their particular

environments (including seasonal and weather considerations) will be most effective in encouraging future participation and facility use.

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