



NEWS RELEASE

Playing together: Canada's first national study on new citizens, sports & belonging

TORONTO, ON, JULY 8, 2014 – The Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC) has released *Playing together – new citizens, sports & belonging*, the country's first national survey exploring new citizens' participation in Canada's sporting culture and how sports can advance integration. *Playing together* includes firsthand accounts from more than 4,000 new citizens collected from a national online survey and cross-country focus groups.

"With immigration rapidly changing Canada's demographic profile, it's more important than ever to listen to new citizens' perspectives on how Canada can accelerate their path to full inclusion," said Gillian Smith, ICC Executive Director & CEO. "This study sheds light on the important role sports can play in effective integration if we focus our attention on removing the structural barriers to new citizens' ability to participate in Canada's sporting life."

New citizen respondents told us sports are a natural and universal connection point, more welcoming than many other social structures, including the workplace. Sports also help new citizens learn the Canadian social landscape and soft cultural skills, while offering access to informal, but vital, social networks. 69 Per cent of new citizens who played sports within their first three years in Canada believed it helped them learn about Canadian culture. New citizens shared that, while conversations may start on the topic of sports, they often lead to deeper discussions about Canada's politics, culture and history; many made their first "Canadian friend" while playing or watching a sport.

To put a face to the findings, the ICC invited Karl Subban, father of Montreal Canadiens star P.K. Subban, to share his family's remarkable story at the results launch: "Ice hockey has defined my family as individuals and as Canadians: an airplane moved us to Canada and hockey moved us from *new* Canadians to Canadians. *Playing together* shines a spotlight on Team Subban's story and supports my belief that sports have the power to unite, embrace cultures and enrich communities."

New citizens also shared how Canada's sports organizations can get them into the game, suggesting: opportunities to try winter sports for free; creating a Canadian sports welcome package; fostering partnerships with groups already connected to new citizens (like libraries and community centres); and, sending professional athletes to community events and festivals.

Other key findings:

The new citizen participant

- The top five sports regularly played by new citizen respondents are: running (39 per cent), swimming (32 per cent), cycling (26 per cent), soccer (18 per cent), badminton (12 per cent) and tennis (11 per cent).
- 54 per cent have tried a new sport once and are open to trying Canada's winter sports.
- Kids motivate new citizens to get involved: 44 per cent of survey respondents have children who play organized sports, but only six per cent have children in mainstream Canadian sports (hockey or baseball/softball).

The new citizen fan

- New citizens recognize hockey's connection to the Canadian identity: 71 per cent have '*some interest*' in watching the sport, and participants joked about "scoring points" with Canadians if you can pretend to know what you are talking about.
- Approximately one quarter of survey respondents said they don't follow baseball or football because they aren't familiar with the rules.
- New citizens love Team Canada: more than half watch the Summer and Winter Olympics.

Playing together – new citizens, sports & belonging was made possible through the generous support of Bouygues Building Canada and Doug & Lois Mitchell. To learn more about the study and read the full report visit icc.ca/en/insights.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP

Founded and co-chaired by the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson and John Ralston Saul, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC) is a national, non-profit charity that helps accelerate new citizens' integration into Canadian life through original programs, collaborations and unique volunteer opportunities. While our focus is on encouraging new citizens to take their rightful place in Canada, we want all citizens – new or not – to embrace active citizenship in their daily life. This study is just the beginning of many conversations with new citizens we want to bring to light. For more information, visit icc-icc.ca. You can also follow us on Twitter ([@ICCICC](https://twitter.com/ICCICC)).

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