

What is community sport?

- Community sport runs from the playground to the podium.
- It is sport led, organized, supported or enabled by community volunteers and institutions, ranging from simple pick-up games, to community and school-based sport leagues, to elite high performance competition.

A presence in every community

- Community sport is present in virtually every Canadian community. There are 33,650 sport and recreation organizations in Canada, 71 percent of them local.
- 28 percent of adult Canadians and approximately 50 percent of children and youth participate directly in sport, while 18 percent of Canadians belong to a local sport club, league or organization.

Volunteer driven and supported

- Community sport is largely supported by the communities themselves, relying heavily on volunteers and only minimally on government support.
- Sport and recreation organizations make up 21 percent of Canada's nonprofit sector but engage 28 percent (5.3 million) of all volunteers – more than any other sector.
- 1.8 million Canadians coach amateur sport while 800,000 participate as amateur sport referees or officials. 73 percent of sport organizations have no paid employees at all
- On average, sport and recreation organizations receive only 12 percent of their funding from governments, compared with 49 percent for voluntary organizations overall.

The sport we want - a positive social force

- Canadians intuitively know, and research shows, that Canada's community sport system possesses a unique potential that is profoundly linked, not just to the availability of community sport, but to the quality of the sport experience itself.
- Studies have shown that the full value of community sport is only realized when sport is conducted in a certain way – when it is inclusive, fair, fun and fosters genuine excellence – when it is true sport.
- What Canadians understand to be good sport – the sport they want – is, in fact, the sport that delivers the greatest benefits to their families and communities. It is True Sport.
- 90 percent of Canadians believe that community-based sport is a positive influence in their lives and rank it second only to families as a highly positive influence in the lives of young Canadians.
- Fewer than one in five Canadians believe this potential is being fully realized.

The growing gap

- From 1992 to 2005, Canadian adult sport participation rates dropped from 45 percent to 28 percent.
- Canadians are concerned that community sport is increasingly being pulled toward the values of commercial sport, becoming overly focused on competition, and that too many people are excluded (71 percent cite cost as a major barrier).
- Sport participation rates peak at age 10 to 13, then decline steadily with age. According to a 2003 youth survey, the leading reasons for youth not participating in sport are lack of time (34 percent) and lack of interest (30 percent).
- In a 2002 Decima survey, respondents identified the following as the most serious issues facing community sport today: harassment (38 percent), intolerance/racism (29 percent), lack of fair play (21 percent), and injuries (18 percent), focus on winning/competition (16 percent), violence (10 percent), parental over-involvement (10 percent), parental under-involvement (7 percent), and poor coaching/leadership (6 percent).
- These views point to a growing gap between the positive benefits Canadians believe sport can provide and what they are actually experiencing.

Closing the gap

- Delivering on sport's benefits requires that we build an inclusive True Sport community sport system that delivers the sport Canadians want. This is not the job of sport alone. Local communities have a leading role to play, together with federal and provincial/territorial governments.
- Policy makers at all levels need to make the connection between sport and the social outcomes they are seeking, and develop intentional strategies, policies and programs that mobilize the power of sport to achieve these goals.
- Sportspeople – athletes, parents, coaches, and volunteers – need to recognize the value of true sport, and actively work to make this the sport they practice in their communities.
- Together, these efforts will determine whether we will close the gap between the sport we have and the sport we want – or widen it.
- The purpose of this report is to enable communities, policy makers, and business leaders to see the tremendous potential that lies within our community sport system and to catalyze new approaches that will put this potential to work for Canadians – building a comprehensive, accessible and inclusive community sport system that delivers the sport we truly want – True Sport.

Download WHAT SPORT CAN DO: The True Sport Report

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