

# Participation in Canadian society through sport and work

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Tuesday, October 10, 2023

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With more than 450 ethnic or cultural origins reported in the 2021 Census, the rich diversity is reflected in all spheres of Canadian life, where people in Canada live, play and work. New data from the *Survey Series on People and their Communities* (SSPC), collected from May 5th to July 25th 2023, provide insight into this diversity, with information on sport and political engagement, as well as workplace cultures and shared values.

This release focuses on participation in sport and experiences at work, which are key indicators in Canada's [Quality of Life Framework](#) and the [Social Inclusion Framework](#). Together with information on the experiences of different population groups, these data help provide a valuable understanding of social inclusion, equity and diversity within different aspects of Canadian society.

## About half of Canadians participate in sport

Involvement in sport is just one example of participating in Canadian society, and represents a [key well-being indicator](#) in the Quality of Life Framework. While playing a sport is consistently ranked as the [most common form of civic engagement](#), the prevalence, motivations to play, and barriers to participate vary by gender, racialized group, and immigration status.

Throughout Canada, people from all walks of life participated in some type of sport in the 12 months preceding the survey, with slightly more than half (55%) of people aged 15 years of age and older reporting participating in sports such as soccer, ice hockey, swimming and running. Overall, men (62%) were more likely to participate in sports than women (49%).

Across the majority of all population groups, the participation rates of men were higher than those of women, but the difference was most pronounced among Filipino (55% of men versus 29% of women) and Black (66% of men versus 42% of women) populations where men were much more likely to play sports than women. The Arab population also showed discrepancy between men and women's sports participation, with high rates for men. Indeed, 7 in 10 Arab men played a sport compared with just under one-half of Arab women (48%).

Overall, for both women and men, the Korean (62%) and Chinese (62%) populations were among the most likely to have played sports, and this remained true for men and women in these groups (69% for both Korean and Chinese men, and 55% for both Korean and Chinese women). Meanwhile, the least likely groups to report sport participation were South Asian (46%) and Filipino (41%) populations.



**Table 1**  
**Canadian participation in sport over the 12 months preceding the survey, by racialized group and gender**

	Participation in sports		
	Overall	Men	Women
	%		
South Asian	45.5	55.0	34.5
Chinese	61.7	68.7	55.4
Black	53.8	65.7	42.4
Filipino	41.1	55.4	29.3
Arab	60.3	69.6	48.2
Latin American	58.5	65.4	51.9
Southeast Asian	50.6	58.4	43.4
West Asian	60.4	66.7	53.0
Korean	62.1	68.5	55.4
Japanese	57.6	60.0 <sup>E</sup>	55.8
Multiple racialized groups	59.0	67.5	50.6
Not belonging to a racialized group	56.3	61.4	51.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>55.4</b>	<b>61.6</b>	<b>49.3</b>

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

Source(s): Survey Series on People and their Communities (5378) — Sport, Workplace Culture, Political Engagement and Shared Values.

## What is the most popular sport? It varies!

Among those who participated in some type of sport over the previous 12 months, swimming was the most common, reported by over one-third (35%) of people. This was closely followed by cycling (33%) and running (27%).

The popularity of specific sports varied across racialized groups. Swimming topped the list overall but was the leading sport for only the non-racialized population (37%), West Asians (36%) and Koreans (36%). Running was the favourite sport among the greatest number of racialized groups. Chinese (40%), Japanese (35%), Southeast Asian (35%), South Asian (33%) and Black (32%) populations participated in running, more than any other sport, as well as people belonging to two or more racial or cultural groups (i.e., multiple racialized groups) (37%).

Soccer was another popular sport among racialized groups. It was most common among the Arab population (40%) and was the second most common sport for Black respondents (31%).

In general, the Canadian-born population was more likely to have participated in winter sports such as ice hockey, skating, skiing and snowboarding, compared with immigrants, who were more likely to have played soccer, tennis or basketball.

## Most people play sports for health and fitness

Playing sports can be done recreationally or competitively, though most people played recreationally over the previous 12 months. Overall, 83% of sports players reported playing sports recreationally, outside of a club or league. This was sometimes done in combination with more structured recreational programs, through a club or league, such as group fitness, intramural sports, or sport clubs. Almost one-quarter (24%) played recreational sports, while a smaller share (11%) said they were registered in a competitive sport.

When asked what motivates them to participate in sports, 82% of people who took part in sports cited physical health and fitness, followed by fun, recreation or relaxation (70%), mental health benefits (65%) and doing activities with friends (54%).

## Cost of participating is a common barrier to sport participation for racialized groups

Overall, a lack of interest (35%) was the most often cited by respondents as a reason for not playing sports over the previous 12 months. This was the case for both men and women, and was seen across all racialized groups. Two other commonly cited reasons for not playing sports were lack of time (33%) and age (24%).

The cost of participating was reported as a barrier by 11% of people who did not play sports. This was more often cited by Koreans (20%), West Asians (20%) and Latin Americans (17%), who were nearly twice as likely as non-racialized Canadians (10%) to cite this barrier.

Immigrants were more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to indicate lack of time (37% for immigrants versus 30% for Canadian-born people) and age (28% versus 24%) as barriers to participating in sports.

**Table 2**  
**Barriers to participating in sport over the 12 months preceding the survey, by racialized group**

	Selected barriers to sport participation								
	Did not have the time	Injury or health concerns	Age	Disability	Programs or facilities not available in your community	Too expensive	Participated in physical activity other than sports	Did not know where to participate or access programs	Not interested
	%								
South Asian	47.6	12.1	18.7	3.8	4.4	10.4	11.5	7.3	28.9
Chinese	35.9	13.2	28.9	4.2	3.4	10.9	10.8	7.0	39.1
Black	47.0	15.0	13.7	5.3	4.4	11.1	11.8	8.3	28.6
Filipino	57.8	14.0	17.8	2.6	3.3	14.1	7.7	10.7	32.6
Arab	46.1	15.1	12.4	4.5	2.5	12.0	8.4	7.0	25.7
Latin American	48.1	15.5	12.3	4.5	3.8	17.1	13.6	10.5	27.5
Southeast Asian	47.0	10.3	20.0	3.6	3.5	11.9	9.1	6.6	38.5
West Asian	55.0	19.0	18.5	7.6	6.0	20.0	11.5	7.6	20.8
Korean	45.1	12.8	20.6	3.4	4.3	20.0	8.4	10.3	40.0
Japanese	31.0 <sup>E</sup>	24.2 <sup>E</sup>	20.1 <sup>E</sup>	7.4 <sup>E</sup>	6.3 <sup>E</sup>	15.6 <sup>E</sup>	13.6 <sup>E</sup>	3.7 <sup>E</sup>	45.8 <sup>E</sup>
Multiple racialized groups	50.3	22.0	21.6	7.8	3.8	26.8	14.1	7.1	33.4
Not belonging to a racialized group	27.3	24.3	26.7	10.7	3.0	10.0	14.9	3.1	36.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>35.2</b>

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

Source(s): Survey Series on People and their Communities (5378) — Sport, Workplace Culture, Political Engagement and Shared Values.

## Women more likely to say cultural differences enrich their workplace

Work constitutes a significant domain of life, characterized by connections that can profoundly impact health, economic well-being, job satisfaction, and career advancement. Just as engaging in physical activity can positively influence overall well-being, experiences at work play a pivotal role in fostering feelings of inclusion and respect within the workplace.

Just under half of those who worked over the previous 12 months stated they felt that cultural differences enrich their workplace (46%). Women (49%) were more likely than men (44%) to say they felt that cultural differences enriched their workplace.

For nearly all racialized groups, more than half felt that cultural differences enrich the workplace (ranging from 41% to 65%). While 43% of those not belonging to a racialized group indicated that they felt cultural differences enriched the workplace, this group was the most likely to indicate that there were no cultural differences in their workplace (16%).

More than half (54%) of immigrants said they felt that cultural differences enrich their workplace, compared with 43% of the Canadian-born population. Additionally, immigrants (10%) were less likely than Canadian-born respondents (15%) to indicate that there were no cultural differences in their workplace.

### **Around 85% of Canadians feel cultural differences are respected in the workplace**

Around 85% of Canadians who have worked at a job or business in the previous 12 months felt that cultural differences were respected in their workplace. Racialized groups (81%) were less likely than non-racialized Canadians (86%) to feel that cultural differences were respected in their workplaces. Japanese (87%), Latin American (86%) and Arab (86%) people, in addition to those who do not belong to a racialized group, were most likely to say that they felt that cultural differences were respected. However, Black (74%), Korean (74%) and Chinese (81%) people in Canada were least likely to believe that diversity was valued in their workplace. Immigrants (82%) were less likely to indicate that cultural differences were respected in their workplace than the Canadian-born respondents (86%).

### **More than one-fifth of Black and Korean people in Canada report having experienced unfair treatment, racism or discrimination while at work**

Around 12% of those who worked in the previous 12 months indicated that they had experienced unfair treatment, racism or discrimination while at work. Women (15%) were more likely than men (10%) to report having experienced some type of unfair treatment.

Among those reporting experiences of some type of unfair treatment in the workplace, race or skin colour was the most common reason (29%), followed by sex (27%) and age (23%). Among women, the top basis of unfair treatment in the workplace was sex (37%), followed by race or skin colour (25%). For men, race or skin colour was the top reason (35%) followed by ethnicity or culture (27%).

All racialized groups were more likely than the non-racialized group (10%) to report having been subjected to some type of unfair treatment in the workplace. However, Black (26%) and Korean (20%) people in Canada were most likely to experience some type of unfair treatment. Immigrants (15%) were also more likely than the Canadian-born (11%) to experience some type of unfair treatment while at work.

Race and skin colour was one of the top reasons for reporting some type of unfair treatment at work for those belonging to racialized groups, ranging from a high of 78% among Black people to 28% for Latin American people. Ethnicity or culture was another common reason, especially for South Asian (50%) and Arab (48%) groups. Another commonly reported reason for some type of unfair treatment among Arab people in Canada was religion (45%). Having an accent was a top reason cited by Latin American people, which was as common for this group as ethnicity or culture (40% for both reasons).

For immigrants in Canada, the main reasons reported for experiencing some type of unfair treatment while at work was race or skin colour (46%), and ethnicity or culture (38%), followed by accent and language (28% each).

The analysis of sports and cultural diversity in the workplace only covers two of the many facets of Canadian society that can be examined. Future analysis using the SSPC on topics such as shared values and political engagement will continue the contribution to a greater understanding of the experiences of different groups of Canadians.

**Table 3**  
**Workplace experiences in the 12 months preceding the survey, by racialized group**

	Felt cultural differences are respected in the workplace	Felt cultural difference enrich their workplace	Experienced discrimination while at work
	%		
South Asian	82.5	55.7	14.5
Chinese	80.9	47.3	12.4
Black	73.7	57.6	26.5
Filipino	83.1	54.9	17.5
Arab	86.0	64.8	14.7
Latin American	86.2	65.3	16.4
Southeast Asian	82.0	51.2	15.0
West Asian	82.3	59.2	17.4
Korean	73.8	41.2	19.9
Japanese	86.7	54.2	14.4
Other racialized group, n.i.e.	83.5	49.3	22.6
Multiple racialized groups	82.6	59.8	22.1
Not belonging to a racialized group	86.2	42.6	10.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>84.7</b>	<b>46.3</b>	<b>12.2</b>

**Note(s):** The categories "completely" and "mostly" have been combined for both "Felt cultural differences are respected in the workplace" and "Felt cultural differences enrich their workplace."

**Source(s):** Survey Series on People and their Communities (5378) — Sport, Workplace Culture, Political Engagement and Shared Values.

### Note to readers

The data in this release are from the second survey of Statistics Canada's survey series, Survey Series on People and their Communities (SSPC), which included the population aged 15 years and older with an oversample of racialized groups and immigrants.

The first survey in the SSPC survey series, looked at perceptions of life during the COVID-19 pandemic, collected data a variety of topics, such as community engagement, trust in people and confidence in Canadian institutions.

The concept of racialized population is measured with the "visible minority" variable in this release. "Visible minority" refers to whether a person belongs to one of the visible minority groups defined by the Employment Equity Act. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.

### Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5378.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).