

Study: Unfair treatment, racism and discrimination in community sports in Canada, 2023

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In 2023, 6% of individuals in the wider sports community reported having experienced unfair treatment, racism or discrimination in community sports during the previous five years. The prevalence of self-reported unfair treatment, racism or discrimination in community sports was higher among members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community (21%), the racialized population (12%) and people who reported having a disability (9%).

The new study titled "[Unfair treatment, racism and discrimination in community sports in Canada](#)" uses data from the 2023 Survey Series on People and their Communities to examine issues concerning unfair treatment, racism and discrimination in community sports in Canada among people aged 15 and older.

The study sheds light on the prevalence of self-reported unfair treatment, racism or discrimination in the wider sports community, which includes people in athletic and non-athletic roles, as well as spectators. Contextual information about unfair treatment, racism and discrimination in sports is also explored, such as the motivations for discrimination and the types of discriminatory behaviour that victims experienced.

In addition, the study examines broader perceptions of racism and discrimination in community sports among people in athletic roles, including sports participants' confidence in the training of sports personnel to prevent and address incidents of racism and discrimination.

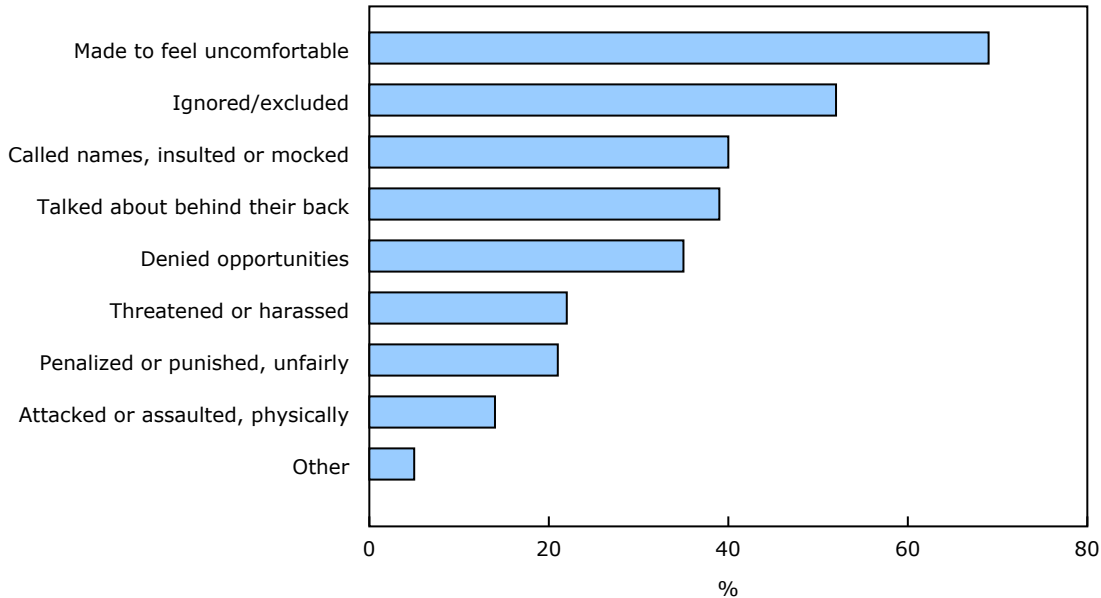
One in seven victims of unfair treatment, racism or discrimination in community sports in the previous five years reports having been physically attacked or assaulted

In 2023, victims of unfair treatment, racism or discrimination in the wider sports community (i.e., people in athletic and non-athletic roles, including spectators) reported having experienced a range of discriminatory behaviours in the five previous years, and sometimes more than one type. Most commonly, victims were made to feel uncomfortable (69%). Acts of greater harm were also reported: over one in five (22%) victims reported having been threatened or harassed, and one in seven (14%) reported having been physically attacked or assaulted.



Chart 1

Types of discriminatory behaviour victims reported experiencing in community sports in the previous five years, 2023



Note(s): The study population consisted of people aged 15 and older who were part of the wider sports community during the previous five years, including those in athletic and non-athletic roles, as well as spectators.

Source(s): Survey Series on People and their Communities (Panel 4), 2023 (5378).

Incidents of unfair treatment, racism or discrimination occurred across a broad range of sports environments. The most common locations reported by victims included playing fields (61%), public community centres (46%), and schools and campuses (32%).

Instigators of unfair treatment, racism or discrimination within the sports community are most often athletes or sports participants

In 2023, a range of instigators perpetrated unfair treatment, racism or discrimination within the previous five years, most commonly athletes or sports participants (54%), followed by coaches (40%) and spectators (38%).

Close to one-quarter (24%) of victims of unfair treatment, racism or discrimination stated that the incidents had been formally reported (e.g., they filed an official complaint or report with a coach, an administrator, a referee, an organizer, police or security). Further, nearly one-quarter (24%) of victims indicated that the incidents had been informally disclosed (e.g., they told a teammate, friend or family member, or they discussed the incidents on social media). However, 4 in 10 (40%) victims stated that the incidents had been neither formally nor informally reported or disclosed.

Over one-quarter of sports participants in athletic roles report feeling that racism and discrimination are problems in community sports in Canada

In 2023, over one-quarter (26%) of individuals who, in the previous 12 months, had participated in sports in athletic roles (i.e., sports participants) indicated that they felt racism and discrimination were problems in community sports. The study also found that close to one-quarter of sports participants lacked confidence in the training of sports

personnel to prevent (22%) or address (27%) incidents of racism and discrimination in community sports. The proportions were higher, nearing half, among sports participants who had previously experienced unfair treatment, racism or discrimination in community sports.

Perceptions of the inclusivity and safety of sports environments can impact participation in sports. Among people who had participated in sports in athletic roles in the previous five years, over 1 in 10 (11%) indicated that they had recently discontinued sports participation because of a negative experience (e.g., health and safety reasons, feeling unwelcome, or discrimination).

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Note to readers

This release summarizes findings of the study "Unfair treatment, racism and discrimination in community sports in Canada," released today. The study, funded by Canadian Heritage, is based on data from the 2023 [Survey Series on People and their Communities](#) (SSPC).

The SSPC is a series of social surveys that began in 2022, which involved creating a panel of people who agreed to complete a series of short surveys. The study mainly focused on Panel 4, using Panel 2 for some additional contextual analyses that appear in text boxes. These surveys were administered in 2023 and covered topics related to sports participation and racism and discrimination in community sports, among others. The reference period for Panel 4 was November 27 to December 17, 2023, while the reference period for Panel 2 was May 5 to July 25, 2023. Although the same respondents were approached for each panel of the SSPC, cohorts differ between them because of varying response rates.

The SSPC is part of Statistics Canada's Disaggregated Data Action Plan, which aims to produce detailed statistical information to highlight the lived experiences of specific population groups, such as women, Indigenous peoples, racialized groups and people living with disabilities. Using the 2021 Census survey frame, the sample for the SSPC included an oversampling of immigrants and Canadians who self-declared as being part of racialized groups. This enabled the production of more reliable statistics for diverse racialized groups and immigrant populations.

All estimates were produced using survey weights, which address non-response bias and make the results representative of the Canadian population. The sampling variance was calculated by using bootstrap weights.

Definitions

Community sports: These are organized sports activities that include community and school sports leagues, competitive club sports, recreational sports, and drop-in sports. Community sports can be organized and offered by neighbourhoods, townships and municipalities; by local organizations; or by volunteers.

Sports participants: These are individuals who participated in athletic roles in community sports in the previous 12 months. They do not include those who participated in community sports exclusively in non-athletic roles.

Sports community: This includes individuals who actively participated in community sports (i.e., athletes and players) and those involved in non-athletic roles, such as coaches, referees, volunteers, managers, administrators and spectators, within the previous five years.

Sports personnel: This refers to coaches or instructors, referees or officials, managers, administrators and volunteers in community sports.

Racialized population: The concept of "racialized population" or "racialized group" is derived directly from the concept of "visible minority" in the 2021 Census. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." They consist mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese. Indigenous people are not included among the racialized population in the current analysis. Estimates specific to Indigenous groups were not reportable because of small sample sizes.

2SLGBTQ+: The Government of Canada adopted the use of the acronym 2SLGBTQI+ to refer to Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people and those who use other terms related to gender or sexual diversity. Statistics Canada uses the acronym 2SLGBTQ+ for data analysis purposes as information is not yet specifically collected about intersex people in surveys.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5378.

The study titled "[Unfair treatment, racism and discrimination in community sports in Canada](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

The infographic "[A look at unfair treatment, racism and discrimination in community sports, 2023](#)," which is part of *Statistics Canada — Infographics* ([11-627-M](#)), is now available.

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) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).