

# What Do Sport Organizations in Canada And England DO to Integrate Immigrants in Sport? Implications for a Changing Europe

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## Aim

The aim of this study is to gain insights from two international contexts, Canada and England to understand how sports organizations are innovating to encourage integration of immigrant communities.

## Research Questions:

- What changes in structures, technology, people and products/services are sports organizations implementing to integrate immigrants in sport?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of innovations used and how can these lessons guide more effective integration of immigrants in sport?

## Theoretical Background

Multiculturalism and immigration has a rich history in both Canada and the UK; with immigrants making up 21.9% and 14% of the populations respectively in 2016 (Office of National Statistics, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2017). Immigrants, are generally defined as those who are foreign-born, and includes all individuals who have ever migrated from their country of birth to their current country of residence. This group is highly diverse, and many migrate for numerous reasons including a desire for economic prosperity, improved standards of living, as well as individuals who are forcibly displaced. 'Immigrant' encompasses the terms migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and includes a variety of people of differing nationalities, social-economic and cultural backgrounds. In fact, over the last few decades, global instability has led to a rise in international immigration and by the end of 2016, 65.6 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide because of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations (UNHCR, 2016).

Many countries, including Canada and England, are looking at ways to encourage and support immigrants' integration into new communities; with one method of achieving this being through sport and physical activity. An Australian study by Block and Gibbs (2017) indicated that participation in sport can lead to many physical and psychosocial benefits and, may even act as an important mediator for achieving positive settlement. Yet, immigrant communities have low participation rates due to barriers such as discrimination, costs and cultural sensitivity (Block & Gibbs, 2017). Thus, sport organizations need to innovate their practices to recruit and retain this new population in their programs. Innovation at the organizational level is a subset of organizational change and can be defined as the adoption of 'something' new in an organization (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006). Slack and Parent (2006) recognize that sport organizations are in a constant state of change in four potential areas: technology, products/services, structures/systems and people, which we use to categorise innovations in this study.

## Research Design

The purpose of this research is to explore the innovations and gaps in the current Canadian and English sport systems, focusing around the integration and accommodation of immigrants

into sport organizations. Phase one, involved an online audit of national Canadian and English sport organizations (NSO) websites, for key terms that might indicate an innovation targeted towards an immigrant population. This provided an initial sense of the extent to which NSO's and their component clubs are innovating and what specifically is currently being (or not being) done. Then phase two, involves semi-structured phone interviews with selected sport organizations (from club to regional/provincial levels) under the Sport Canada and Sport England umbrella (20-30 in total), which focus specifically on challenges and opportunities organizations have encountered in implementing innovative changes to attract or retain immigrant participants.

## **Results and Discussion**

Results show that sport organizations are adopting many innovations in attempt to provide participation opportunities for immigrants. Within the Canadian context, 45 of the 58 NSO's (78%) mentioned terms that indicated *some* kind of recognition made towards immigrant participants (including athletes, coaches and officials), although the extent of innovative practice varied widely. 11 sports (19%) had a public statement on their website from top leadership indicating a need to engage with more immigrants. 6 NSO's (10%) had policy aimed at making it easier for immigrants to coach or referee in Canada. Of greatest interest to our research, was the 6 NSO's (10%) and approximately 20 clubs that were identified as having developed programs aimed at immigrants. This forms the basis for targeted interviewing towards these NSO's and clubs, which have specific strategies focusing on this community. The results for the NSO audit within the English context are currently being analyzed and will be compared against this data set. Preliminary audit findings, alongside the results from the interviews will lead to valuable insight into the innovations used to encourage immigrant integration.

## **Conclusion**

This study allows the discovery of best practices across an international context, as well as the identification of common trends, challenges and opportunities that sport organizations may face, when trying to implement changes or new innovations to better integrate immigrant populations. Please note, this research is currently in progress with the interviews being undertaken currently till July 2018, ensuring that the preliminary findings will be ready for the conference in September 2018.

## **References**

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