

Chinese-Canadians' perspective on health and sport participation

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Research question

- *what we know:*
 - As one of Canada's largest and fastest growing ethnocultural groups, Chinese-Canadians have strikingly different views of health and sport from their Western counterparts.
 - There is a pressing need to conduct research within specific immigrant communities in order to better tailor policy and services for sport participation.
 - Culturally appropriate services and programs are crucial to the quality and effectiveness of health promotion and sport participation.
- *what we don't know:*
 - What are Chinese-Canadians' perspectives and practice related to health and sports?

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Research results/analysis and their general implications for enhanced participation

Methods: Quantitative-qualitative mixed methods were employed to study 100 first-generation Chinese immigrants, aged 25 or above, residing in one of four urban centres: Toronto, Vancouver, Halifax, or St. Catharines. A mixed sampling strategy combined purposive sampling, snowball sampling in Chinese-Canadian communities, and open calls.

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Key findings:

1. Participants generally perceived sport as a component of a healthy lifestyle and a means to maintain and enhance health.
2. These Chinese-Canadians experienced mixed changes over the course of immigration: many reported increases in sports and physical activity (e.g., because they had more time and resources) while others reported decreases (e.g., because they lacked friends and access to preferred activities).
3. Factors that contributed to positive changes in sports and physical activity included: encouragement from friends, colleagues, and media; available resources (e.g., facilities, equipment, natural environment); affordable costs; easy access; enhanced awareness about health; and more spare time in comparison to China.
4. Common sports practices included ping pong, badminton, tennis, basketball, soccer, golf, swimming, and cycling. It seemed that ping pong was the preferred ball game, but participants regretted that it was not better respected in Canada.

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5. Most participants recommended newcomers engage in sports and physical activities to attain benefits in terms of physical health, as well as mental health (e.g., getting out of the house, making friends, releasing stress), integration into society, and meaningful leisure. They also encouraged newcomers to take advantage of community resources (e.g., free or low cost programs, facilities) and natural environments (e.g., parks, wilderness) in Canada. Other suggestions for newcomers included trying to do fun and suitable (e.g., age or ability appropriate) sports and physical activity, do sports and physical activity with friends or in groups, and adopt Canadian sports (e.g., skating, skiing, hunting) while maintaining Chinese preferred ones (e.g., taijiquan, ping pong).
6. The sources of information about sport and physical activity included (in decreasing order of importance): (a) media (e.g., magazine, books, TV, internet); (b) friends, relatives, schoolmates, and colleagues; (c) medical professionals; (d) environment such as surroundings, community centres, and general society; (e) school education; and (f) family, including parents and siblings.

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7. There seemed to be cultural differences and conflicts between Chinese-Canadians and mainstream sports and physical activity.
8. Many Chinese-Canadians are not aware of sports programs and resources available in communities, or provided by government agencies or services.

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Implications of results for policymakers & practitioners

1. Policy-makers should be aware that current sport policies are primarily based on Western cultural values (e.g., the more, the better; competitiveness) that may not be shared by all ethnocultural communities. Culturally appropriate sport participation policies should be developed to serve the diverse needs within Canada's multicultural society.
2. There is a need to develop sport programs and facilities (e.g., table tennis, badminton) in response to culturally appropriate sport participation. Culturally appropriate sport and recreation facilities and park design should consider growing needs among major minority groups.
3. Sport organizations at all government levels for sports such as badminton and table tennis should target the Chinese-Canadian community to provide a variety of opportunities for their participation in favoured sports. Other sport organizations such as boccia, bowling, curling, judo, karate, taekwondo as well as disabilities sports (e.g., goalball, wheelchair basketball) should make themselves visible and promote their sport programs in Chinese-Canadian communities because these sports are well aligned with Chinese cultural values.
4. Media, medical professionals, and community centres, as important factors for Chinese-Canadian sport participation, should make efforts to encourage Chinese-Canadians to participate in sports for health and leisure. Language-specific information (e.g., online sources, brochures, pamphlets) should be available for major minority groups to promote programs and services for sport participation.

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Future research

1. The present project identified some increases and some decreases in sport participation among Chinese-Canadians: who are those that reported increases or decreases in sport participation, and what factors contributed to these changes?
2. What are the differences in sport participation before and after 10 years of immigration among Chinese-Canadians? (Note: Ten years is considered a milestone in research on immigrant health.)
3. What about sport participation for second-generation Chinese-Canadians? Are second-generation Chinese-Canadians more integrated into mainstream sport participation patterns as a result of increased acculturation compared to first-generation Chinese-Canadians?
4. What are the specific barriers or challenges to Chinese-Canadians' sport participation? How can these barriers or challenges be addressed in order to increase their sport participation?
5. Does the framework developed in the present project (e.g., changes and causes of changes in sport participation after immigration, factors and sources of sport participation) apply to sport participation for other ethnocultural groups? What strategies help to increase sport participation for other top immigrant groups in Canada (e.g., Indians, Filipinos)?
6. How does sport participation help immigrants' acculturation and integration in Canada?

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