



3rd DRAFT - REPORT

STRENGTHENING CANADA: THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION IN AMATEUR SPORT IN CANADA

Presented to:
Sport Canada

Prepared by:
Michael Bloom, Michael Grant and Doug Watt
The Conference Board of Canada

April 10, 2005

About this Report

This report is intended to help Sport Canada determine the importance of increased participation in amateur sport for Canadian leaders and general public.

Enhancing participation in sport is one of the four federal policy goals for sport, yet there is relatively little empirical knowledge about how sport participation benefits Canadians through its impact on health, education, citizen engagement and the economy. As a result, policy-makers lack the necessary evidence-base Ask required to inform policy decisions and to connect with other federal policy priorities.

The objective of this report is to improve the state of knowledge on the socio-economic benefits of participation in sport so that the federal government and Canadians can gain a better understanding of its importance to the well-being of individuals and communities, the Canadian economy and society. It explores how participation in sport impacts on economic performance, population health, skills development for citizenship and the workplace, citizen engagement and social cohesion. In doing so, it sheds light on the connections between the policy goal of enhanced sport participation and other public policy priorities.

CONTACT

Dr. Michael R. Bloom

Executive Director, Strategic Projects and Initiatives
& Director, Education and Learning
The Conference Board of Canada
255 Smyth Road
Ottawa, ON
K1H 8M7

Tel: (613) 526-3280 ext. 229

Fax: (613) 526-4857

E-mail: bloom@conferenceboard.ca

This report was written by:

Dr. Michael Bloom, Executive Director, Strategic Projects & Director, Education and Learning

Douglas Watt, Senior Research Associate, Education and Learning

Michael Grant, Principal, Grant Insights

It incorporates contributions from Conference Board colleagues:

Natalie Gagnon, Research Associate, Education and Learning

Greg Hoover, Research Associate,

Dr. Mahmood Iqbal, Principal Research Associate

Dr. Kurtis Kitagawa, Senior Research Associate, Education and Learning

Strategic advice was provided by:

Contents

About this Report.....	ii
1. Introduction	1
2. Parameters	3
Research Methodology	4
3. Overview of Canadian Participation Rates in Amateur Sport	5
4. Key Drivers of Participation	10
Age	10
Gender	11
Household Composition	11
Educational Attainment	12
Income	13
5. Major Benefits of Sports Participation	14
6. Health Impacts	17
7. Skills Impacts	21
9. Social Impacts.....	24
10. Economic Impacts	28
11. Conclusions	31
12. Implications for Future Action	33

1. Introduction

Canadians love amateur sport. It gives them pleasure and it helps them connect with one another. Sport helps them to define themselves and their communities, and it contributes to their sense of what it means to be Canadian.¹ In any one year, more Canadians are involved as active participants in amateur sport than take part in public education at all levels combined—more than eight million people in 2004. Millions more take part as volunteers and attendees. In one way or another about half the entire population of Canada is involved annually with amateur sport.

It is because they care so much about it, that amateur sport engages so many. And it is because amateur sport engages so many—as families, friends, communities and individuals—that Canadians experience its effects so strongly. Amateur sport touches many aspects of their lives, directly and indirectly. Yet, many Canadians are unaware of how powerfully sport affects them:

- it changes individuals—including their health and well-being, their social networks and sense of social connection, and their skills;
- it affects communities—including the social cohesion and social capital of communities;
- it impacts the economy—creating jobs and providing work for thousands of Canadians;
- it helps shape our national and cultural identity.

Recognizing the importance of amateur sport to Canada, in 2001, the Canadian Ministers of Sport, agreed to place new emphasis on sport in Canada by recognizing a number of fundamental principles as applicable to Canadian sport:²

- Sport is a vital part of Canada's tradition and history.
- People encounter sport in a variety of ways, as athletes, coaches, officials, parents, supporters, volunteers, leaders, scientists, medical personnel, sponsors, artists, media, fans and spectators.
- Sport is for fun, it brings joy, it can make the spirit soar and it can enrich lives.
- Sport tests and builds character; sport allows the opportunity for children and young people to build the values of teamwork, dedication and commitment. Sport requires honesty and fair play. Sport builds courage.
- Sport builds healthy bodies as well as good character. Frequent, high quality physical activity through sport leaves a legacy of health that can last a lifetime.
- Sport is one of the areas of human activity that allows the quest for excellence.

¹ For the purposes of this study, sport means amateur sport. Statistically, the scale of amateur sport is so large compared with professional sport (except for economic impacts) that the study of sport impacts on a national scale is in effect a study of amateur sport impacts.

² Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, Ontario, *Expectations for Fairness in Sport: A Declaration, Enacted by the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Sport Ministers* (August 10, 2001)

<<http://www.tourism.gov.on.ca/english/sportdiv/sport/expect.htm>> The Ministers agreed to make this Declaration widely known and to direct their officials to design, in consultation with the sport community, the Terms of Reference for a process that would lead to the development and implementation of a *Canadian Strategy on Ethical Conduct in Sport*.

- Sport builds communities. Young people, their parents and coaches, volunteers, sponsors and supporters are brought together by sport. Sport builds communities as people come together for sport on the fields, on the diamonds, inside the arenas, to leave as more than neighbours, but also as friends.

In the United Kingdom, a recent study emphasized that in order to compete with many other worthy causes for a share of limited public resources, sport needs to better demonstrate tangible benefits to individuals, communities and countries as a whole.³ To this end, a recent Canadian plan has made it a priority to increase awareness of sport within governments by presenting compelling evidence of the benefits of regular participation in sport to targeted government departments (such as health, justice, education and social services), in order to advance collaborative work, and to facilitate program partnerships.⁴

Despite its significance, and the compelling need for empirical evidence to build awareness among the public and with policy makers, there is no recent study of the overall socio-economic impact of amateur sport on Canada and Canadians.⁵ The lack of in-depth examination of the sport impacts on individuals, communities, organizations and the country has meant that policy makers have lacked the empirical basis for developing sport policies that connect sport to the wider frame of government policy making. This report is intended to help fill the knowledge gap by providing policy makers and the public with a credible and comprehensive perspective on a wide range of sports impacts that will provide a basis for further policy and programme development.

³ Sport England, *Best Value Through Sport: The Value of Sport to Local Authorities*. (Keldia Printing Company, Ref. no. 901, June 1999).

⁴ *The Canadian Sport Policy: Federal-Provincial/Territorial Priorities for Collaborative Action 2002-2005*. (2001) and *The Canadian Sport Policy* (May 24, 2002). [As endorsed by Ministers in Iqaluit, Nunavut on April 6, 2002].

⁵ There are significant gaps in the research on sport impacts; much of the work in Canada on the benefits of sport is anecdotal and lacks quantitative data to support it or theory to explain it systematically. Several studies have been carried out in other countries and regions in the past decade. For a recent example, see *The Citizens of the European Union and Sport* (European Commission, November, 2004).

2. Parameters

Reflecting the wide range of effects due to amateur sport, key findings are grouped into four main pillars of impact: health, skills, social cohesion and economic. The study explores the nature and extent of participation in amateur sport, including the drivers of participation (including health concerns, social needs, and community objectives) in amateur sport and the impact that this participation has on different facets of our economy and society—building from individual impacts (health and skills) to societal impacts (social cohesion and the economy).

Definition of Sport

For the purposes of this study, sport is defined as:

an activity which requires a degree of physical exertion and skill, which typically involves competition with others and a set of rules (such as ice hockey, soccer, and bowling)

or

physical activity undertaken to improve on personal sporting performance (for example, training to reduce time or improve distance).

For the purposes of this study, sport *excludes* competitions that use motorized vehicles, and physical activities without either competition or the intention of improving personal sporting performance (such as jogging for exercise, and biking to work).

Definition of Participation

This study examines three types of participation in amateur sport:

1. **Active Participants** — individuals who engage in amateur sports for the purposes of competition with others, under a set of rules, or to improve their personal sporting performance.
2. **Volunteers**—individuals who volunteer their time and expertise in amateur sports (for example, as a coach, a driver, an official, or a fundraiser).
3. **Attendees**—individuals who attend amateur sporting games or events.

Research Methodology

The study has employed a combination of methodologies, including a literature review and a *National Household Survey on Participation in Amateur Sport* telephone survey.

Quantitative and qualitative data from the survey have been analyzed. The results are presented in the report, below.

- **Literature Review**—a review of national and international studies organized around each of the four pillars of impact analysis (health, skills, social cohesion, and the economy).
- **National Household Survey**—a national representative household survey of 2408 Canadian households, using stratified random sample methodology.
 - ▲ 1502 individuals completed the household survey on participation in amateur sports. Of these:
 - 1322 individuals completed the household survey on their own behalf, and for other people in their household.
 - 180 individuals responded on behalf of their household (i.e., the individuals who answered the telephone do not participate in sports themselves but did answer on behalf of the other people residing in the household who are sports participants).
 - ▲ The 1322 responses were used to estimate the adult incidence rate of participation in amateur sport (1322 responses /2408 households surveyed) which is estimated to be 54.9 per cent. This is accurate within +/-2.7 per cent, 19 times out of 20 (POPEST)
 - ▲ 504 individuals completed a special non-participants survey. This allowed for a comparison to be made between the characteristics of participants and non-participants.
 - ▲ Because the number of non-participant respondents was capped at 504 the incidence rate for non-participants in amateur sports cannot be calculated to a meaningful level of accuracy.
 - ▲ All data for participation rates relate to the *one year period* ending December 2004 when the survey took place.
 - ▲ For analytical purposes, the category of active participants includes two groups of individuals: those who are *solely* active participants, and those who are active participants and volunteers or attendees, or both.

3. Overview of Canadian Participation Rates in Amateur Sport

About 13.7 million adult Canadians—55 per cent of the adult population—take part in amateur sport as active participants, volunteers, or attendees, or some combination of the three.⁶ In fact, most adults who participate in amateur sports do so in more than one way—through a combination of active participation, volunteering and attending:

- Active participants total 7,738,000, representing 31.0 per cent of the adult population.
- Volunteers total 4,568,000, representing 18.3 per cent of the adult population.
- Attendees total 11,332,000, representing 45.4 per cent of the adult population.

Individuals are more likely to attend an amateur sporting event (45.4 per cent) than participate actively (31.0 per cent) or volunteer (18.3 per cent). Most of the attendees, however, are not merely sedentary. Almost 2/3 of the attendees are also involved in amateur sport as active participants and volunteers. Volunteers are even more likely to be involved in sports in other ways: the majority participate as active participants and attendees as well as volunteers. A similar pattern holds for active participants. Nearly three-quarters of active participants also attend and volunteer.

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the combinations of participation in amateur sport in Canada.

Table 1

Activity of Adults in Amateur Sport

Total Adult Population of Canada, by Type of Participation (n=2408)

Attendee	Active Participant	Volunteer	% Adult Population
Attendee Only			17.0%
	Active Participant Only		7.3%
		Volunteer Only	1.0%
Attendee & Actively Participate			12.3%
Attendee &		Volunteer	5.9%
	Active Participant & Volunteer		1.2%
Attendee, Active Participant & Volunteer			10.3%
Total – Attendees	Total – Active Participants	Total Volunteers	Total – All Types
45.4%	31.0% 	18.3 %	54.9 %
Source: The Conference Board of Canada, <i>Household Survey</i> , December 2004.			

⁶ Out of an adult population of 24,943,000 in December, 2004.

Table 2
 Activity of Adults in Amateur Sport
 Participating Population, by Type of Participation (n=1322)

Attendee	Active Participant	Volunteer	% Adult Population
Attendee Only			31.0%
	Active Participant Only		13.3%
		Volunteer Only	1.8%
Attendee & Active Participant			22.3%
Attendee &		Volunteer	10.6%
	Active Participant & Volunteer		2.1%
Attendee, Active Participant & Volunteer			18.7%
Total – Attendees	Total – Active Participants	Total Volunteers	Total – All Types
82.8%	56.5%	33.4 %	100.0 %
Source: The Conference Board of Canada, <i>Household Survey</i> , December 2004.			

While impressive, figures for sports participation are lower than for fitness activities in general. This may be because the performance bar for sports participation, especially active participation, is higher than for most fitness activities. In addition, active participation in amateur sport, more than most fitness activities, calls for a fair degree of skill as well as physical fitness. Many popular sports, such as ice hockey, baseball, skiing and soccer, require a considerable capacity for applying tactics and strategies while engaging in relatively strenuous physical activity. They also require specialized neuro-muscular skills because they involve a relatively high degree of difficulty to perform.

Requirements for substantial physical fitness also extend to volunteers. While not typically as strenuous as being an active participant, being a sport volunteer calls for a substantial commitment of effort before, during and after an event. Some volunteer roles, such as officiating, can be quite strenuous when officials are required to run or skate adeptly in order to keep up with the action on the rink or playing field.

Slightly more than 30 per cent of the people who participate in amateur sports limit themselves to their role of attendee for spectator. Since attending requires less time and much less energy than actively participating and volunteering, it attracts many individuals who are not athletic in their own right—but who are interested in sports nonetheless.

Range of Sports Activity

Canadians enjoy participating in a very wide range of sports but focus their energy on a few sports. Although nearly 100 sports are played in Canada in organized amateur activities on a fairly large scale, involvement is strongly concentrated in fewer than a dozen highly popular sports, including ice hockey, golf, soccer, baseball, basketball, volleyball, skiing, swimming and cycling.⁷

The national focus on a core group of sports is mirrored in the behaviour of individual participants. Although some passionate sports lovers take part in as many as ten different sports, as an active participant, volunteer or attendee, this is very unusual. Nearly one-half of active participants take part in only one sport (47.1 per cent). Slightly more than one-half of active participants engage in two or more sports: 52.9 per cent. The overwhelming majority of these multi-sport active participants take part in only 2 or 3 sports (44.3 per cent). A mere 8.7 per cent compete in four or more (See Table, Part 1).

Table 3
Total Adult Population of Canada
Most Popular Sports, by type of participation

Total Adult Population — Participation in Sports					
Active Participant	%	Volunteer	%	Attendee	%
Ice Hockey	6.6	Ice Hockey	4.7	Ice Hockey	20.7
Golf	6.5	Soccer	4.1	Soccer	11.8
Baseball	4.7	Baseball	2.5	Baseball	7.9
Skiing	4.0	Volleyball	2.0	Basketball	6.1
Soccer	3.8	Basketball	1.6	Volleyball	4.5
Volleyball	3.1	Skiing	0.7	Football	4.4
Basketball	2.8	Swimming	0.6	Swimming	2.4
Tennis	2.6	Skating	0.6	Cycling	2.2
Curling	2.6	Curling	0.5	Skating	2.0
Bowling	2.4	Football	0.5	Curling	1.5
Swimming	2.4	Martial Arts	0.4	Martial Arts	1.4
Cycling	2.2	Golf	0.4	Gymnastics	1.2
Running	1.9	Gymnastics	0.4	Track and Field	1.1
Badminton	1.5	Bowling	0.3	Rugby	1.0
Squash	1.0	Badminton	0.3	Tennis/Bowling	0.9

Source: The Conference Board of Canada, *Household Survey*, December 2004.

⁷ See full list, Appendix B 

Table 4
Participating Adults
Most Popular Sports, by type of participation 

Sport Participants' Only—Participation in Sports (main respondents)					
Active Participant (n=747)	%	Volunteer (n=441)	%	Attendee (n=1094)	%
Ice Hockey	21.4	Ice Hockey	25.4	Ice Hockey	45.5
Golf	21.0	Soccer	22.4	Soccer	26.0
Baseball	15.3	Baseball	13.4	Baseball	17.5
Skiing	13.0	Volleyball	10.9	Basketball	13.3
Soccer	12.2	Basketball	8.8	Volleyball	9.9
Volleyball	10.0	Skiing	4.1	Football	9.6
Basketball	9.0	Swimming	3.4	Swimming	5.2
Tennis	8.3	Skating	3.4	Cycling	4.9
Curling	8.2	Curling	2.7	Skating	4.3
Bowling	7.8	Football	2.5	Curling	3.2
Swimming	7.6	Martial Arts	2.3	Martial Arts	3.0
Cycling	7.3	Golf	2.0	Gymnastics	2.7
Running	6.2	Gymnastics	2.0	Track and Field	2.5
Badminton	5.0	Bowling	1.6	Rugby	2.3
Squash	3.3	Badminton	1.4	Tennis and Bowling	2.0

Source: The Conference Board of Canada, *Household Survey*, December 2004.

Four Patterns of Participation

The *first pattern* of participation, and numerically most significant, is sports that attract large number of adult participants in all three categories of participation: active participation, volunteering, and attending. (See Table 3).

Five sports fit this pattern and engage very large number  adults: ice hockey, baseball, soccer, volleyball and basketball. Each draws between 750,000 and 1.75 million active participants annually, together  even larger numbers of attendees, and from 400,000 to more than a million volunteers. One possible reason for the great popularity of these sports is that they are team sports with important family associations. They are often played by several members of a family at the same time, including both adults and children, which may encourage other family members to seek to share in the experience by volunteering and attending. This would help to

explain why these sports are able to draw significantly larger numbers of participants overall than are sports that are essentially sports for individuals.

In this regard, ice hockey stands in a class of its own with 1 ¾ million adult competitors, over a million volunteers, and more than five million attendees in 2004—more than one-fifth of the entire adult population of Canada, and nearly half of all Canadian adults who attended an amateur sporting event last year.

The *second pattern* is sports which attract relatively  active participants, but inspire a depth of dedication which draws many spectators and volunteers. Several *individual* sports occupy this special niche. Two of the best examples are gymnastics and ice skating. They tend to be the more *artistic* sports which offer compelling spectacles that attract many people who are not interested in sports solely on the basis of athleticism or team competition. These sports tend to attract usually high numbers of female spectators  and attendees compared with other sports. Ice skating, for example, made the top ten sports for volunteering and attending but scored below the top 15 for actively participating. (See Table 3).

The *third pattern* is sports which attract large numbers of active participants but relatively few volunteers and attendees at the amateur level. The best examples are golf and skiing. Both engage over a million each of active participants, seeking to improve their personal performance, and occasionally participating in formal competitions, but only small numbers of volunteers to assist and attendees to watch them. (See Table 3). 

The *fourth pattern* is sports that attract large numbers of active participants and attendees but lack a large volunteer engagement. Two sports, swimming and cycling, that may be viewed as team or individuals sports, fit this pattern. Both are very popular as competitive activities that each engage more than ½ million adults annually as active participants, and also attract more than one-half a million adults as attendees but have far smaller numbers of volunteers participating. (See Table 3). 

Duration of Activity

Active participants tend to engage in sport for significant periods of time—on average, an hour or more at a time. Nearly 80 per cent of active participants said that they compete for 60 or more minutes at a time. Only 8.3 per cent compete for 45 minutes or less at a time. (See Table, Part 2). This has potential significance for health policy makers.⁸

⁸ See Health Impacts section below for a fuller discussion.

4. Key Drivers of Participation

Age

Figures for active participation in amateur sport are impressive for all age groups. Predictably, rates are the highest for young adults: more than two-thirds of Canadians between the ages of 18-20 are active participants. Active participation rates strongly co-relate to age—falling steadily from teenage years through to the senior years. Yet the fall is slow. The 40-49 cohort rate is fully one-third of the entire adult cohort population, meaning that (assuming no change in the active participation rate over recent decades) half of these mature adults who were active participants as young adults have remained active for more than 20 years of their adult life. Remarkably, active sports participation still engages more than a quarter of all Canadians over the age of 60, testimony to an enduring passion for amateur sport.

Table 5
Total Adult Population
Participation Rates – by Age

Total Adult Population Participation Rates— by Age	% Active Participants	% Volunteers	% Attendees
Under 20 years of age	67.2	27.6	63.8
20 – 29	53.7	23.3	56.0
30 – 39	42.5	27.1	62.7
40 – 49	33.3	28.9	58.7
50 – 59	29.6	18.8	50.0
60 years of age or older	26.1	7.2	41.4

Source: The Conference Board of Canada, *Household Survey*, December 2004.

Retention rates are even more impressive among volunteers. The initial high rate of over 27% for adults under the age of twenty may be partly explained by the requirement in some provinces for young adults to complete a certain amount of volunteer activity as part of their secondary school graduation requirements. This figure falls off somewhat for people in their twenties, but rises again once they reach their thirties. A possible reason for the increase in volunteering for the post-29 cohort is that 30-39 year olds are volunteering in sports where their children are actively participating, as well as in sports where other adults participate. However, the evidence is still inconclusive. Thereafter, rates of volunteering are stable across the adult age spectrum until they begin to dip among the over 50s, falling more steeply for those over age sixty.

Rates of attending amateur sports do not drop off as quickly as do the rates for active participation and volunteering. Given that attending an event or competition does not require much physical fitness or skill, it is easier for adults to maintain their involvement with amateur

sport as attendees and spectators to an advanced age compared with active participation and volunteering. For this reason, the participation rate of the adult attendees can remain as high as 50% among people who have reached the age of 60.

Gender

Men are much more likely than women to be active participants in sport. Almost two-fifths of all Canadian men are active participants compared with fewer than one-quarter of all women. This is a significant difference and one that is similar to earlier findings so gender differences do not appear to be closing. This gap is not as wide for the volunteer and attendee roles, however. Here, males participate at only slightly higher rates than women. In general, female participation rates demonstrate that amateur sport is an important element in women's lives, even if not quite as prevalent element as it is in the lives of men.

Table 6
Total Adult Population
Participation Rates—by Gender

Total Adult Population Participation Rates, by Gender (N=2408)	% Active Participants	% Volunteers	% Attendees
Male	39.0	20.8	47.2
Female	23.4	15.9	43.8

Source: The Conference Board of Canada, *Household Survey*, December 2004.

Household Composition

The presence of children in the household has a significant impact on the *pattern* of adult active participation in sports compared with single person or adults-only households. Soccer (31.6 per cent) supersedes ice hockey (23.1 per cent) as the sport of choice, followed by baseball (18.1 per cent), volleyball (14.9 per cent), basketball (14.7 per cent), and swimming (12.5 per cent). On the other hand, golf, which ranked second (21 per cent) in popularity with adult only households, is only seventh most popular (11 per cent) where children are in the household.

Patterns of volunteerism are similarly altered. Ice hockey is the number one volunteering sport (29.5 per cent), followed by soccer (26.8 per cent), baseball (15.8 per cent), volleyball (12.9 per cent), and basketball (10.3 per cent). Much smaller levels of volunteering are reported for sports such as skiing (3.9 per cent), swimming (3.9 per cent), skating (3.9 per cent), curling (3.2 per cent), football (2.9 per cent), martial arts (2.6 per cent), golf (2.4 per cent), and gymnastics (2.4 per cent).

The presence of children in households did not affect the *rate* of adult involvement in amateur sport as active participants but it did affect the likelihood of adults attending or volunteering. The presence of children in households has an especially strong impact on rates of adult

volunteerism: with children the rate is 32 per cent; without children it is only 16%. Men are especially likely to volunteer: over 38 per cent of men in households with children volunteered. (See Table, DRIVER 1). Perhaps the connection with children is why volunteers are so committed: more than half of the people who volunteer do so over 15 times per year. (See Table, PART 4).

The presence of children also has a significant, but not as potent, impact on rates of attendance at amateur sporting events. Adults in 66% of households with children attend amateur sports compared with adults in 47% of households without children.

There is about an 80 per cent chance of ‘other people’ in the household participating in sports when an adult participant has children—implying that many children participate in amateur sport and that adults volunteer and attend their children’s sports. This effect is true for both males and females, although males consistently participate in amateur sports at higher rates than females.

Table 7

Impact of Children in the Household on Adult Participation Rates

Impact of Children in the Household on Adult Participation Rates— Active Participation, Volunteering and Attending			
Household Makeup	% Active Participants	% Volunteers	% Attendees
No Children	37.0	15.9	47.4
With Children	37.6	31.9	66.3

Source: The Conference Board of Canada, *Household Survey*, December 2004.

Educational Attainment

Education predicts involvement in amateur sport: there is a strong positive relationship between education and active participation, volunteering and attending. The greater the educational attainment of a person, the more likely they are to participate actively, volunteer and attend amateur sports. The most significant behavioural dividing point is between individuals who are secondary school graduates and those who did not complete secondary school. While only 16 per cent of drop outs are active participants in amateur sports, twice as many high school graduates actively participate. From there, the figures rise more gradually for different categories of post-secondary graduates, reaching a peak among university graduates, nearly half of whom are active participants. (See Table, DRIVER 2)

A similar pattern holds true for volunteers. Fewer than one in ten high school dropouts volunteers compared with one in five adults secondary school graduates and one-quarter of college and university graduates. The attendee pattern is somewhat different. Here the only statistically significant difference is between those with less than high school graduation and those who are graduates: one-third of the former participate compared with over one-half of the latter. Beyond this level, education has no appreciable impact on participation rates.

Table 8
Impact of Educational Attainment on Participation Rates

Impact of Educational Attainment on Participation Rates—Active Participation, Volunteering and Attending			
Educational Attainment	% Active Participant	% Volunteer	% Attend
Less than high school	16.7	8.3	33.9
High school graduation certificate or some post-secondary	34.7	19.2	54.6
Trades certificate or diploma	33.1	22.8	52.8
College certificate or diploma	36.7	24.5	58.5
University certificate, diploma or degree	46.7	26.7	57.8

Source: The Conference Board of Canada *Household Survey*, December 2004.

Income

People with higher incomes are much more likely to participate in amateur sport than people who earn less. As with educational attainment, this is most pronounced when comparing the lowest level of income with higher levels. The difference is particularly important among volunteers. The percentage of volunteers from households with annual income over \$40,000 is three times higher than for households earning less than \$20,000. Those from households earning over \$100,000 are five times as likely to volunteer as people in under-\$20,000 households. The most likely explanation for the difference is that participation in amateur sport typically involves substantial spending on equipment, registration fees, travel, accommodation and food which precludes many lower income earners who have less discretionary income from taking part (see below, Impact on the Economy).

Table 9
Impact of Income on Participation Rates

Impact of Income on Participation Rates—Active Participation, Volunteering and Attending			
Annual Household Income	% Active Participant	% Volunteer	% Attend
Under \$20,000	21.7	7.2	37.3
\$20,000 to \$39,999	26.1	13.6	46.6
\$40,000 to \$59,999	35.5	21.3	52.5
\$60,000 to \$79,999	41.9	25.2	60.4
\$80,000 to \$99,999	46.3	28.6	61.5
\$100,000 or over	55.1	34.7	68.0

Source: The Conference Board of Canada *Household Survey*, December 2004.

5. Major Benefits of Sports Participation

Canadians identified seven major types of benefits gained from participation in sport that can be grouped into three main categories: physical and psychological benefits, social benefits, competition benefits. This categorization of benefits indicates that the perceived value of amateur sport overlaps broadly with the generally perceived value of physical fitness activities as a whole.

Health, Physical and Psychological Benefits

When asked to rate the importance of sport in providing them personally with benefits, they attached the highest importance to the positive physical and psychological effects of sports. About 80 per cent of active participants rated sport as very important in improving physical fitness and health and providing them with fun, recreation and relaxation. Volunteers and attendees also rated these benefits highest, but at slightly lower levels than the active participants. Two-thirds rated sport as very important for physical fitness and health and 61 per cent said it was very important for giving them fun, recreation and relaxation. Both groups also reported a significant psychological benefit in the form of an enhanced sense of achievement due to their participation in amateur sports. (See Table 10).

Social Benefits

Next most important were the social benefits derived from involvement. The majority of participants rated sport as very important in providing their family or household with activities to undertake. Interestingly, volunteers and attendees rated the value of sport as a source of social activity even higher than did active participants. This may be tied to the tendency of adults to volunteer more frequently when they have children in their household, thereby presumably bringing them together in a shared experience of sport which they particularly value. Another explanation may be that families tend to attend games and events together, providing an important social outlet for sharing a common experience, as spectators. Social benefits extend further than the household. Nearly half of active participants, and more than 40 per cent of volunteers and attendees, rate sport as very important for them in meeting new friends and acquaintances and in providing venues for socializing beyond the immediate family or household. (See Table 10)

Competition Benefits

Relatively less important, but still significant, was preparation for sport competition. About 40 per cent of participants rated sport participation as very important as a preparation for subsequent competition. (See Table 10). Interestingly, volunteers and attendees are more inclined to view their participation as very important in preparing for active participation in the future than are active participants. The preparation may not be so much about themselves as about their children. The importance is particularly high in households where there are children: over 47 per cent of adult volunteers and attendees in households with children rated this very important compared with only 42 per cent in households without children. This suggests that parents often see themselves as a part of the process for preparing their children to take part in amateur sport competition such as hockey and soccer tournaments. There are several

ways non-active participation could help. As volunteers, they might gain a better understanding of the sport they can pass on to their children, or take on the essential adult supervisory and coaching roles that are necessary to put on the amateur sporting events and activities for their children. As attendees, they might take their children to events to show them what is involved in actively participating and encourage them to join in themselves in the future. 

Table 10

Major Benefits of Sport Participation (BEN 1 & 2)

Major Benefits of Sport Participation			
	% Active Participants	% Volunteers and Attendees	% Total
PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS			
Physical Fitness and Health			
Very important	81.0	68.6	75.6
Somewhat Important	15.4	19.7	17.3
Not Important at All	3.6	11.7	7.1
Fun, Recreation, Relaxation			
Very important	78.6	61.4	71.1
Somewhat Important	18.6	34.3	25.4
Not Important at All	2.8	4.3	3.5
Sense of Achievement			
Very important	60.9	56.4	59.0
Somewhat Important	32.7	29.6	31.3
Not Important at All	6.4	13.9	9.7
Skill Development			
Very important	52.2	49.0	50.8
Somewhat Important	40.6	35.5	38.4
Not Important at All	7.2	15.5	10.8
SOCIAL BENEFITS			
Family or Household Activity			
Very important	53.4	59.9	56.2
Somewhat Important	31.6	31.4	31.5
Not Important at All	14.9	8.7	12.2
New Friends and Acquaintances, Socialize			
Very important	49.3%	42.4%	46.3
Somewhat Important	39.5%	41.6%	40.4
Not Important at All	11.2%	16.0%	13.3

Major Benefits of Sport Participation			
	% Active Participants	% Volunteers and Attendees	% Total
COMPETITION BENEFITS			
Prepare for competition			
Very important	37.2%	44.9%	40.5
Somewhat Important	35.8%	26.9%	31.9
Not Important at All	27.0%	28.3%	27.6

Methodological Basis for Comparative Analysis

Three main categories of participation in sports activities were established as the basis of the *National Household Survey on Participation in Amateur Sport*: active participation, volunteering, attending.

Benefits from involvement in sports activities vary depending on the nature of the participation. Active participants, for example, gain a different pattern of benefits than volunteers or attendees.

Our methodology, allows us to define three groups, among the households surveyed:

- A) Active participants (some of whom are also volunteers and attendees) (n=747)**
- B) Volunteers and attendees (who are not also active participants) (n=575)**
- C) Non-participants (who are not active participants, volunteers or attendees) (n=502)**

The methodology enables valid comparisons of participants (A+B) with non participants (C) but it is not valid to combine B+C into non-participants. This is because the number of non-participants was capped at 504. So the possible comparisons are:

- ▲ Between A and B and C**
- ▲ Between A + B and C**

Comparisons can also be made *within* the three activity categories but the fact that many people are involved in a combination of the three limits the usefulness of this approach. In order to keep a large numerical basis for comparison, which allows a high level of confidence in the accuracy of the findings, it is best to compare large data aggregations.

6. Health Impacts

Participation in amateur sport and *excellent health* are closely linked. Participation is especially important to outstanding health: over 70 per cent of active participants describe their health as either excellent or very good, compared with less than 50% of non-participants. Volunteers and attendees rank their health even higher than active participants: 86 per cent rate it excellent or very good. (See Table: Health 1). However, active participants are more likely to attach health benefits to their participation than volunteers and attendees.

Active participants attached similar, high importance to sport as a source of relaxation, fun and recreation (4.64/5) and physical fitness (4.55), followed at a slight distance by sport as a source of improved quality of life due to better health (4.40) and stress relief (4.32). These findings are largely consistent with previous studies of physical activity, both amateur sport and fitness activities, which have generally found a close relationship between health and physical activity. (See Table: Health 4).

Sport as a means of weight control was rated significantly lower (3.85) yet this does not appear to have impeded active participants from giving an overall high rating of their personal health. This suggests that weight control is not a major concern for them, even though objective research finds that weight has a major impact on actual health levels. Alternatively, active participants may simply feel that their weight is already at the right level for excellent health. (See Table: Health 4).

Although it may be a key to excellent health, participation in amateur sport may not be a prerequisite to *good health*. When it comes to attaining or maintaining 'good' health, as compared with excellent or very good health, most people consider physical activity of all kinds, not just sport, to be a useful way of improving their overall state of health. Most non-participants in this study think that they are in good health, with over 82 per cent rating their overall health good or better (compared with 95 per cent of active participants and 99 per cent of volunteers and attendees). The reason they give is that they claim to get exercise outside of sport and follow sensible diets.

Respondents' reports of actual usage of the health care system relating to visits to doctors matched the results from their self assessment of health in several significant ways. When asked about visits to doctors, active participants reported 5.3 visits per year on average, compared with 5.5 visits for non-participants (See Table: Health 1B).

The gap in the number of visits would be even greater except that active participants averaged 1.6 annual visits to doctors due to sports injuries. Sport-related visits by active participants may be partly motivated by their desire for medical treatment that will help them achieve a *higher standard* of bodily fitness than non-participants. Their goal may be to achieve a level of fitness that will enable them to continue their active participation sport—a significantly higher level of health than most non-participants require or seek. In other words, many active participants may visit doctors in order to become performance-ready not merely healthy.

If these sports injury related visits are subtracted from the figure for active participants, the average number of visits declines to only 3.7 per year related to general health issues such as illness, disease and chronic care treatment which motivate visits to doctors for non-participants.

This translates into different patterns of work days lost to injury or illness. Compared with sport participants, non-participants were much more likely to be at work. Whereas active participants reported an average of 5.9 days per year lost from work due to injury or illness, or just over one work day lost for each visit to a doctor; non-participants lost only 3.4 days annually, or less one-half a day for each visit.. (See Table: Health 2A).

The difference in the number of work days lost may partly be due to the fact that active participants are staying home for the same reason that they sometimes seek medical treatment—in order to achieve a *higher standard* of bodily fitness that will enable them to continue their active participation in sport. In other words, many active participants may stay home to become performance-ready not merely healthy. Another possible explanation for the difference in behaviour has to do with the fact that active sport participants earn more and are better educated than non-participants, on average. People with higher incomes and better education tend to take a more proactive stance towards their own health care, and may have more discretion to choose to take time off to recover.

Table: Health 1B
Visits to Doctor

	OVERALL			DUE TO SPORTS INJURY		
	N	Total Visits	Average Visits	N	Total Visits	Average Visits
Active Participants	746	3990	5.3	547	881	1.61
Non-Participants	498	2763	5.5	NA	NA	NA
Volunteers and Attendees	568	4676	8.2	206	446	0.5

Table: Health 2A
Work Days Lost to Illness and Injury

	N	Total Days Lost	Average Days
Active Participants	661	3,873	5.9
Non-Participants	356	1,196	3.4
Volunteers and Attendees	485	2,728	5.6

Active sport participation also has a moderate beneficial impact on the amount of stress experienced by individuals. Non-participants are somewhat more likely to say that they are 'quite a bit stressed' than active participants. This reduction of stress benefit is not found, however, among volunteers and attendees as a group: they are actually more likely to feel extremely or quite a bit stressed than non-participants. (See Table, HEALTH2).

Impact of Physical Activity from Sport

It is clear that significant individual health benefits can be derived throughout a person's lifetime from dedicated physical activity. The key is to combine the appropriate levels of frequency and duration. *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*⁹ (CPAG) recognizes that the time needed to realize health benefits from active living depends on the amount of effort spent during the activity. To enjoy the health benefits of exercise, the Public Health Agency of Canada follows CPAG in recommending that people should engage in 60 minutes of light activity¹⁰ seven days a week; 30-60 minutes of moderate activity¹¹ 5-7 days a week, or 20-30 minutes of vigorous activity¹² 4 days a week. CPAG also suggests that personal exercise should involve three kinds of activities to achieve maximum health benefit; endurance, flexibility, and strength activities. Health research¹³ indicates that physical activity in these amounts is important to achieving fitness gains that underpin overall improvements in personal health.

The amount of time is really a proxy for the amount of energy expended in exercise. As a recent published report states "physical activity expending 1000 kcal/wk (4200 kJ/wk) is associated with as much as a 30 per cent reduction in all causes of mortality rates."¹³ A person who engages in less than one of these activity levels is considered inactive. The most recent (2000/01) results from the Canadian Community Health Survey reveal that 56 per cent of Canadians are inactive.¹⁴

Survey findings reveal that active participants engage in an average of 1.91 sports, participating in each sport an average of 83 times annually, an average duration of one hour per time.¹⁵ This amounts to an average of just over three hours of physical activity per week, much of which is moderate or vigorous intensity due to the nature of the sports, which easily meets the Health Canada recommended levels for physical activity. In other words, nearly one-third of Canadian adults are obtaining the recommended amount of physical activity required to maintain good health through their active participation in amateur sport.

This has potential significance for health policy makers.¹⁶ suggests that there is a high potential value in increasing active sport participation as a means of improving overall health of the Canadian population if efforts are also focused on ensuring that individuals engage in activities with sufficient frequency. This improvement in average health levels of individuals could significantly reduce the cost of health care delivery.¹⁶

⁹ See Public Health Agency of Canada website: <<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca>>

¹⁰ For example, light walking, easy gardening, or stretching. The CPAG notes that during the activity the person would start to feel warm, and slightly increase their breathing rate.

¹¹ For example: brisk walking, biking, raking leaves, recreational swimming, dancing, or water aerobics. The CPAG notes that during the activity the person will feel warmer and experience a great increase in breathing rate.

¹² For example, aerobics, jogging, hockey, basketball, fast swimming, or fast dancing. The CPAG notes that during the activity the person will feel quite warm and more out of breath.

¹³ Y.K. Kesaniemi, et al. "Dose-response issues concerning physical activity and health: an evidence-based symposium". *Medicine & Science in Sports and Exercise* 2001 June;33 (6 Suppl): S351-8.

¹⁴ <<http://www.cflri.ca/cflri/pa/surveys/2002survey/2002survey.html>>

¹⁵ Nearly 80 per cent of active participants said that they compete for 60 or more minutes at a time. Only 8.3 per cent compete for 45 minutes or less at a time. (See Table, Part 2).

¹⁶ (See Appendix A, below).

Since active participation in amateur sport generally exceeds the Health Canada intensity, duration, and frequency guidelines cited, Canada's sporting population is likely to live longer and healthier lives, on average, as a result. They may well be more productive as a result because they will enjoy an extended duration of productivity m postponing the effects of aging and being able to perform strongly at work to a later age.

The significance of sport to average health levels has implications for government policy and program choices. The cost to government of supporting amateur sport is very small compared with its health spending. If sport is seen as a proactive strategy for health gains that can reduce health care delivery costs substantially it may be selected as a locus for new policy and investment. The UK is reviewing this connection and considering its choices for just these reasons. As one UK study has put it: "The Government spends £1,135.00 per person on health compared to just £1.38 on sport. A small shift in the health budget would create a step change in sports provision and health promotion."¹⁷ The same could be true in Canada.

¹⁷ The UK Central Council of Physical Recreation

7. Skills Impacts

Sport participation has a significant role to play in developing skills and attitudes that are important for success in work and allow fuller, happier community and family life. More than fifty per cent of participants believe that sport participation is very important to their personal skills development; almost 90 per cent believe that it has some positive impact on their skills development. Active participants are more likely than volunteers and attendees to identify sport participation with skills gains that they can apply *away* from sport: 92.8 per cent compared with 84.5 per cent. (See Table, BEN 1 & 2). Interestingly, the percentage of volunteers and attendees who think sport is not important in their skills formation is double the percentage of active participants: nearly everyone who takes active part in sport becomes aware of the skill building dimension of their sports. (See Table, BEN 1 & 2).

The impact of skills gained from sport is clearly significant to the huge number of people who participate in amateur sports annually. On a personal level, the standard of living of individuals is determined, in large part, by the quality and quantity of skills they develop and deploy over the course of a lifetime.¹⁸ People need a combination of the right skills, attitudes and behaviours to meet the basic personal challenges of work and life.

The most important skill gains for active participants have a strong attitudinal dimension. They include strengthening values about personal integrity; responsibility to others and fair dealing; teamwork skills; and enhanced leadership skills. (See Table, SKILL). These are quintessential transferable skills, or employability skills, which can be put to good use in ever kind of workplace and at every level of responsibility within the organization.¹⁹ Sport participation gives individuals many opportunities to develop the skills that enable them to interact effectively with others and to understand and value importance of working cooperatively. These are skills and attitudes that the labour market prizes highly. They are also skills that help people to play a more positive role in their communities and family life.

Active participants place a slightly higher value on the benefits of sports participation to their own skills development than do volunteers and attendees, but all participants rated sports as a good and important avenue for building their own employability and essential skills. (See Table, SKILL). Volunteers and attendees identify a similar set of skill gains: strengthening values about personal integrity, responsibility to others and fair dealing; recognizing the importance of safety; and teamwork skills. (See Table, SKILL).

Volunteering appears to be highly valuable as a way to develop skills; certainly that is how the volunteers perceive it. Volunteers identified even stronger skill gains than competitors in relation to all eight of the skills that they were asked to consider. (See Table, SKILL). The most

¹⁸ Growth in Canada and other OECD countries has occurred for four major reasons: (1) increased or improved use of labour—more people working more productively; (2) the general rise in the educational attainment among workers; (3) investment in physical capital—including technology which requires that employees have more and better skills; and, (4) a rise in multi-factor productivity (MFP)—where a combination of better skills and better technology leads to more valuable output being produced through innovation and efficiencies in operations. See: Dirk Plat, “*Innovation in the New Economy*,” *ISUMA*, (Spring 2002), pp 54-61.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive list of generic transferable skills that employers seek in recruits and current employees, see *Employability Skills 2000+* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2000).

important areas of skill gain among volunteers are coaching and mentoring skills, personal integrity, responsibility to others and fair dealing; leadership skills and teamwork skills. (See Table, SKILL). Volunteers may rate their skill gains as especially important because the manner in which they are acquired, through coaching, officiating and mentoring, resemble closely the work, community and family environments in which they can be transferred and applied for significant reward and desirable results. As such, the connections may well be more obvious and easy to appreciate.

Aggregate Impact of Skill Gains

In aggregate, skill gains are important because skills play a defining role in shaping Canada's prosperity and competitiveness. In a sense, skills are the backbone of a nation's economy, a measure of its ability to survive in a global marketplace, as well as an important asset to individuals who possess them.²⁰ On a national level, if investment in human capital is not maintained through education, training and learning initiatives, the skills and knowledge that underpin the Canadian economy will decline, leading to skills gaps and skills shortages that cause lost productivity and performance.²¹

Research also shows that improved skills help families and communities—as people become more skillful their performance, behaviour and interactions change, leading to safer and more cohesive communities, greater civic participation, better integration of newcomers, lower healthcare costs, and much more.

Sports and Skills Development

To develop people's talent, and to provide opportunity for all to contribute and benefit from the knowledge economy a *collaborative approach* among all sectors of society is needed in order to strengthen learning in Canada. There are many *informal* learning opportunities and *informal* learning environments that offer individuals the opportunity to develop their skills, attitudes and behaviours—sport is an important one of them.²²

Sporting skills are learned first in the family and the school. In countries with a strong sporting culture, like Canada, parents, teachers, youth leaders, and others devote a large amount of voluntary time to sport coaching and organizing.²³ Sporting skills are ~~also~~ learned in community-based organizations, sporting leagues, clubs, and associations.

²⁰ Alison Coleman, Philip Hunter and Jane Simms, *A Director's Guide—Skills: Transforming Business—Towards a Better and More Competitive Workforce* (London: Director Publications Ltd, 2004), p. 5.

²¹ Labour shortages particularly affect small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)—the main source of job creation in Canada for the past decade. Lacking human capital, many businesses choose to pass on growth opportunities—a high price to pay for a business and for the economy in general. In 2002, it is estimated that 265,000 full-time jobs across Canada remained vacant within SMEs due to a lack of suitable candidates, illustrating the labour market's failure to match the supply and demand of labour. Andreea Dulipovici, *Labour Pains: Results of CFIB Surveys on Labour Availability* (Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, April 2003), pp. 1 – 2.

²² The formal education system—K-12 and Post-Secondary Education—and adult learning programs play a critical and important role in developing the skills of individuals. However, they are not the only contexts where skills can be introduced, taught, practiced, and developed.

²³ Kel Sanderson, Frances Harris, Sarah Russell and Sheryl Chase, *The Economic Benefits of Sport—A Review*. (Business and Economic Research Limited: August 2000), p. 23.

Developing skills through sport requires stakeholders, including sport organizations, regulating bodies, media, parents and spectators, coaches and athletes to make a conscious decision to integrate generic skill development into the way sporting activities are conducted, rewarded, and covered in the press. Coaches and athletes also need to make a conscious effort to develop skills. Skills such as demonstrating leadership, being a team player and showing respect are not merely incidental side-benefits of sport participation; they can be deliberately cultivated through sport participation.

Sport Builds Skills

Sport builds character. It teaches people the benefits of self-discipline, team-work, mutual respect and fair play. For youth, in particular, sport enables them to channel their energy, competitiveness and aggression in a socially beneficial way.²⁴

In 2004, the European Commission's Directorate General, Education and Culture conducted a survey on the educational and social values of sport in the European Union. A majority of citizens in the European Union (EU) cited the improvement of health as being the principal benefit of sport (78 per cent); followed by the development of physical performance (46 per cent), relaxation (43 per cent), having fun (39 per cent), and being with friends (24 per cent). Sixteen per cent of EU citizens said that the principal benefit of sport was to develop new skills, and another fifteen per cent said that sport helped to build character and identity.²⁵

EU citizens were also asked about the importance of sports and the values that it develops. Team spirit (52 per cent) ranked highest, followed by discipline (46 per cent), friendship (38 per cent), effort (36 per cent), self-control (33 per cent), fair play (32 per cent), respect for others (32 per cent), and sticking to the rules (31 per cent).²⁶

In an earlier Canadian study, *The General Social Survey* (1998), sport was found to offer many benefits to individuals—including fitness, health, personal life-style and well-being. The study also explored other benefits from sport, including the development of social skills, self-esteem, stress-management, and leadership skills. When asked to rank the degree to which sport was important in providing additional benefits, active Canadians most frequently ranked health and fitness (71 per cent), and relaxation (69 per cent) as very important benefits of sport. Other top choices were: a sense of achievement (57 per cent), family activity (43 per cent) and making new friends and acquaintances (41 per cent).²⁷

Given these national, community and individual factors, it is not surprising that human capital strategies focusing on skills and knowledge development now occupy a centre stage in the public policy of many countries.

²⁴ Sport England, *The Value of Sport: Executive Summary—Ref. No. 918*, June 1999.

²⁵ European Commission, *The Citizens of the European Union and Sport*. (Special Eurobarometer 213/Wave 62.0—TNS Opinion & Social, November 2004), p. 13.

²⁶ *The Citizens of the European Union and Sport*. p. 19.

²⁷ Statistics Canada, *Sport Participation in Canada, 1998 Report*, (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2000) Cat. No. CH24-1/2000-IE-IN. p. 49. See Appendix 1, below for a fuller discussion of the skills, attitudes and behaviours that sports participation builds.

9. Social Impacts

Amateur sport helps build social capital in society by improving social cohesion. The causality is unambiguous. People who participate in amateur sport experience a high degree of interaction with other individuals, by themselves and as part of their membership of teams. This interaction improves inter-personal relationships, establishes relationships of trust and builds teamwork skills that generate gains in social cohesion. Social cohesion, in turn, is a fundamental component in building social capital in society.

Social capital is important. According to the World Bank, a society's social capital "includes the institutions, relationships, attitudes and values that govern interactions among people and contribute to economic and social development. It includes the shared values and rules for social conduct expressed in personal relationships, trust and a common sense of "civic" responsibility, which makes a society more than a collection of individuals."²⁸

The relationships are crucial. It is the *networks of relationships* among persons, and by extension, the firms and institutions to which they belong in a society, together with associated norms of behavior, trust, and cooperation, that enable a society to function effectively. They are its social capital.²⁹ These networks of relationships, or *social networks*, have many points of origin. Amateur sport works by constructing associations of people that constitute social networks with a defined purpose: to engage in sport. But these networks also generate trust and create an attitude of willingness to interact with others outside of the sport context. This preparedness to be a part of new and broader networks constitutes an increase in social capital within Canadian society that can be harnessed to social and even economic advantage.

Most amateur sport involves a strong element of social activity for active participants, volunteers and attendees alike that tends to support social cohesion. Active participants in team sports typically train with others and develop strategies for play that involve sophisticated forms of collaboration with team mates that builds social skills and connections. Even sports that are more individualistic, such as the triathlon, have a social aspect that is the result of cooperative training activities and engaging in organized competitions with other athletes.

Numerous studies of social cohesion have found that sport and community recreation are important to life in a city, and that recreation and sports facilities contribute to a city's social fabric.³⁰ For youth, city recreation and sports facilities can be a place to learn about being active participants in the life of the community. Parents' who volunteer demonstrate to their children

²⁸ <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/61ByDocName/ResourcesOnSocialAnalysisGlossaryofKeyTerms>

²⁹ *Deardorff's Glossary of International Economics*: See <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~alandear/glossary/s.html>

³⁰ Jean Harvey, *Sports and Recreation: Entertainment or Social Right?* Studies include: Peter Donnelly and Jay Coakley, *Working Paper Series: Perspectives on Social Inclusion: The Role of Recreation in Promoting Social Inclusion* (Toronto: The Laidlaw Foundation, December 2002); and The Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc. and the Canadian Council on Social Development, *Four Hypotheses about the Policy Significance of Youth Recreation: Lessons from a Literature Review and Data Analysis on "Learning through Recreation"* (May 2001).

and others the value and importance of getting involved in community sports, recreation or other areas of citizenship.³¹

The Canadian Council for Social Development, in a recent study established a link between young people's participation in structured recreation, their physical development, their psychosocial development and behaviour, their current and future civic behaviour and their future civic competence.³² In addition, studies of young people who are completely marginalized indicate that sports and recreation may provide a means for this group to reintegrate, provided that they are not isolated measures and that young people have input into the nature and provision of these services. nce's experiences in the 1990s with integrating young people from cultural minorities who were living in cities also showed how sports and recreation can be part of a social integration policy. The sociability networks that develop in and around community sports and recreation organizations strengthen social bonds. According to some, they are the building blocks of social cohesion and are a rich and varied source of social capital.³³

Volunteers, too, experience a wide range of social interactions that build skills and a sense of connection. This happens on two levels. First, they interact with active participants through their roles as coaches, mentors, officials and organizers of sports events. Second, they develop connections with their fellow volunteers with whom they often engage in extensive planning and preparation for events and competitions. Finally, attendees experience significant types of social interaction through the shared experience of observing amateur sports and supporting their favourite teams or individual competitors.

The Relationship Between Sport, Civic Engagement, Social Capital and Social Cohesion

Typically, community-based sport programs support civic engagement, social capital, and social cohesion in a number of ways:

- Sports provide opportunities for volunteerism.
- Relationships between children, families, parents, and neighbourhoods are reinforced.
- Community-based sports organizations establish partnerships with similar organizations in their area (e.g., local community service centres, school boards, schools, etc.).
- Relationships between various levels of government are strengthened and in some cases, new programs can grow out of these existing relationships.

Sport is commonly a way for families to come together. In fact, the presence of children in the household is a key driver of all dimensions of sport participation, including actively participating, volunteering and attending. Sport also plays a significant role in bringing people from different neighborhoods within a single community together, thereby helping to build a wider sense of community. (See Table, COMM1). By taking people away from their immediate

³¹ Jean Harvey, *Sports and Recreation: Entertainment or Social Right?* 
<http://www.policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=v5n1_art_07.>

³² Cited in Jean Harvey, *Sports and Recreation: Entertainment or Social Right?* Jean Harvey is Director, Research Centre for Sport in Canadian Society, University of Ottawa.

³³ Jean Harvey, *Sports and Recreation: Entertainment or Social Right?*

neighbourhood amateur sport broadens their horizons. This pattern of interaction is fairly consistent across the different types of participation, actively participating, volunteering, attending (See Table, COMM2)

There is also an international dimension to amateur sport. Sports like golfing, skiing, and hockey are most likely to see participation outside Canada. Golfing and skiing are probably associated with vacation activities whereas hockey is more likely to be undertaken as part of international tournaments. (See Table, COMM3) Some sports like squash and cycling have a relatively high degree of international participation, which may reflect their position as a niche sports where competitors are keen to compete abroad and indeed may have to go abroad to find decent competition

Australia has identified similar benefits from sport participation and has developed government policy to build sport participation as a result. In Australia, sport and recreation is recognized as playing an important part in the lives of individuals and helping to shape community identity. In the State of Victoria, for example, sport and recreation opportunities are seen to provide settings for social interaction, sharing common interests and enhancing a sense of community. This broad appeal of sport and recreation has resulted in the development of a dynamic industry in this State.³⁴

The continued development of the sport and recreation sector relies on the collaborative efforts of a number of different stakeholders, including: the not-for-profit, private and government sectors. Such collaboration maximizes the contribution of all players—whether at grass roots or elite levels, and engages volunteers and professionals alike. Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV) is able to maximize the economic and social benefits provided to all residents of the State by the sport and recreation sectors by ensuring greater access and opportunities for sport and recreation participation by all Victorians; improving the quality of community sport and recreation facilities; strengthening the capacity of sport and recreation organizations; and reinforcing the enriching role that sport and recreation plays in people's lives.³⁵

Sport and Community Safety

Both participants and non-participants point to social benefits resulting from amateur sport providing people with a place to meet and interact with others. They are much less inclined to believe add sport can be used effectively to address intractable social problems such as juvenile delinquency. (See Table, COMM4). Here, however, there is evidence from the UK to suggest that sport may play a role, in construction with other types of recreation and leisure activities, in dealing with very difficult issues of community safety.

In the UK, levels of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity among young people are a major problem for many communities and societies—particularly for people living in poorer neighbourhoods. The causes for crime and disaffection among young people are complex and multi-dimensional and it would be incorrect and unrealistic to claim that sport alone can reduce the levels of youth crime in society. However, over the last 15 years or so, in England, “sports,

³⁴ Department for Victorian Communities—Sport and Recreation Victoria. <<http://www.dvc.vic.gov.au/srv.htm>>

³⁵ Department for Victorian Communities—Sport and Recreation Victoria.

outdoor pursuits and constructive leisure activities have become a well-established feature of initiatives whose aim is to divert offenders and young people at risk away from crime.”³⁶

In Bristol City, the city council has used sport as a central policy vehicle in its programs to overcome exclusion and to regenerate the poorest neighbourhoods in the city. One of these initiatives, the “Voice of Southmead” has demonstrated impressive results in addressing problems of drug-taking and associated levels of criminal activity. The project is focused on a local sports development action plan—jointly developed by the local health authority, police and the city council’s departments of Social Services, housing, and Sport and Youth, working closely with the local residents’ association. Offering a range of different sporting opportunities, the project showed immediate success, including a fifteen per cent drop in crime in the local area in the first four months of operation compared with the same period 12-months earlier, and a forty-three per cent reduction for juvenile crime, in the same period.³⁷

Experiential evidence also exists to show that sport can have an indirect impact on reducing juvenile crime by providing challenge, adventure, and giving meaning and a sense of purpose to young people’s lives where previously there was a vacuum. Sport, delivered in a sound ethical framework, can engender self-respect, self-esteem, confidence, and leadership abilities.³⁸

The general perception is that sport is more effective in breaking down social barriers than in resolving economic barriers. (See Table, COMM5). When it comes to social benefits, all participants feel that sports is generally good for the community but don’t distinguish particular ways in which it is good. Not surprisingly, non-participants ranked the benefits from sports lower than participants across all categories, although they ranked the individual benefits in roughly the same order. Similarly, participants with children were more likely to ascribe positive benefits to youth through their participation in sports (See Table, COMM6).

³⁶ Sport England, *Best Value Through Sport: The Value of Sport to Local Authorities* (London, Ref. no. 901, June 1999), p. 7, as cited in: Utting, *Reducing Criminality Among Young People: A Sample of Relevant Programmes in the United Kingdom* (London: Home Office, Research Study 161, 1996).

³⁷ Sport England, *Best Value Through Sport: The Value of Sport to Local Authorities* (London, Ref. no. 901, June 1999), p. 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

10. Economic Impacts

Spending on amateur sport has a significant impact on the Canadian economy. The intensity of the effect varies from region to region and is correlated to sport participation rates. Regions and communities with the greatest number of participants—active participants, volunteers, and attendees—tend to have the largest aggregate economic activity, through the local development, manufacture, sale and delivery of products and services that are consumed by amateur sport participants. Regions and communities that support local participation in amateur sport, through social and economic policies and other means, experience additional effects³⁹.

Although it is widely recognized that the amateur sport “industry” in Canada contributes to the economy, interpretations differ on what should be counted as part of the amateur sport industry economy, given the complex range of products and services that can be associated with amateur sport. Compared with more traditional industries, like construction, banking, insurance, forestry, or mining—which are easy to define, and whose cranes, scaffolds, bulldozers, office towers and advertising are easily recognizable—the amateur sporting industry is harder to delineate. It includes revenues from a wide range of businesses such as the manufacturers and retailers of sports clothing, and operators of sports facilities and venues, for example.

Sport spending covers a wide range of spending activities. Amateur sport participants spend their money on a multitude of goods and services, including sporting apparel (clothing and foot-ware), sporting equipment, memberships, subscriptions, fees, food, transportation, accommodation, and health services. Spending, in turn, helps to generate and maintain employment in many services and industries, such as retail, hospitality, travel, transportation, tourism, the manufacturing of sports products, wholesalers of sporting goods, the operation and maintenance of sporting facilities and venues, and sports media (sporting magazines, books and electronic media). Given the plethora of component parts, it is challenging to put a dollar figure on the full extent of the economic activity.

One good way to gauge the impact of amateur sport on the economy is to assess household spending. This study’s methodology, which captures the spending by Canadian households on sport *in Canada*, is a good approximation of the total spending and the associated national economic effects. At a micro level, spending is an expression of household preferences to allocate household budgets on sport. At a macro level, the aggregated spending of all households largely determines the level of employment and the overall health of the Canadian amateur sport industry.

The figures for spending would be slightly higher if sport “exports” and “imports” were included. This study excludes sport expenditures by Canadian households outside of Canada. These expenditures are the economic equivalent of sports “imports” in that they lead to an outflow of expenditure from Canada to other countries. Since only about 5 per cent of sports participation by Canadian households takes place outside of Canada, excluding these expenditures this does not significantly alter the findings on spending. Also excluded are the effects of sport “exports,” in the form of foreigners coming to Canada to participate in sports.

³⁹ See Appendix D for detailed information on local and regional impacts.

The net effect of subtracting total “exports” from “imports” is much smaller than the gross spending on either; overall it has only a small net economic impact.

What Determines Spending on Sport?

Spending on sport is determined by a combination of a household’s preference to be involved with sport; the number of people in the household who are involved in sport; the size of the household; and total household income which determines the availability and scale of *discretionary* household income for spending on sports activities. These three key influences on sport spending may sometimes counteract one another.

Income is a particularly important determinant of the level of spending on amateur sport since sport is a non-essential discretionary “service” spending item (compared to clothing, shelter and food, for example). Thus, demand is generally satisfied only after other essentials are covered. Households with a lower level of income or experiencing reduced income tend to cut their sport spending as a means of balancing their finances. On the other hand, households with higher income levels look to sport as a significant outlet for spending for a combination of pleasure and personal or family development. In practice, most households operate under a budget constraint that places an upper limit on the amount they are able to spend on sport. When a reduction in household income through job loss or some other cause occurs it often has a rapid impact on the level of sport spending in a household.

How Much Spending?

On average, Canadian households that participate in amateur sport spend \$ 1,963 per annum on sporting activities. On a per capita basis this represents \$748 spending per capita on amateur sport per year. The total amount of sport spending by the entire sporting population of Canada is \$15.78 billion annually. (See Table, ECON1)

The highest spenders are those who participate in more than one way. Single category participants, both active participants and attendees, spend considerably less than multiple category participants. (See Table, ECON1). Volunteers spend the most because, as a group, they are the most likely to be multi-participants (as active participants, attendees or both).

Income plays a significant role in sports spending. Income elasticity is estimated at about 3 per cent, meaning that participants will tend to spend about 3 cents of every additional dollar earned on amateur sports (See Table, ECON1)

The presence of families within households is a major determinant of household participation: there is about an 80 per cent chance of other people in the household participating in sports when an adult participant has children. However, the number of children can have both a positive and a dampening effect on sport spending. (See Table, ECON2) Spending is optimized at about 3 children in the household, after which household spending starts to decline, possibly because there are relatively larger demands for expenditure on necessities as the number of children rises which tends to constrain spending on sports.

What is the Allocation of that Spending?

Sport spending is characterized by large numbers of relatively small purchases and expenditures on a variety of different goods and services. Some patterns are apparent. Active participants are more likely to spend their money on clothing, equipment and memberships. Volunteers and attendees spend more on food and beverages than anything else: it is the only category where their spending exceeds \$100 per year. (See Table, ECON3).

How is Spending Likely to Change?

Most spending is likely to remain stable, according to participants. Families with children are more likely to say they will increase spending than those without children in the household, reflecting perhaps more discretionary funds available to them without having the need to support children. Even this group is on the whole inclined to hold the line on spending. (See Table, ECON4)

Spending is most likely to increase among active participants, especially on items such as sporting equipment, team fees and memberships and transportation.

It is interesting to see that spending is most likely to decline among people who are already spending more on sports. For instance, the average expenditure of active participants who indicated that they would spend less on clothing was \$2,949 compared to \$2167 for those who said they would increase their spending on clothing. This holds true across the various spending categories (See Table, ECON5).

11. Conclusions

Canada's strong amateur sporting culture is a significant part of the social fabric of Canada. Amateur sport plays a regular and important part in the life of many millions of Canadians.

Amateur sport *significantly strengthens* Canada's economy and society in real ways. It develops skills individuals can use to become more effective and productive in work and it supports social cohesion that builds social capital.

It also provides important psychological benefits. The great majority of participants report that sport gives them a combination of pleasure, satisfaction, self-confidence and a sense of wellness that they value highly. This perception of beneficial impact is an important benefit of amateur sport. Most people report that sport participation gives them a sense of well-being, achievement, a feeling of healthiness, better skills, improved self-esteem and a stronger sense of belonging and self-worth. To some degree perception is reality: if a large enough group of people report benefits that shape their attitudes and behaviours, their perception has real affects.

People who participate in sports report gaining personal health benefits. However the main avenues to physical health are related to a *combination* of physical exercise, sensible diet and avoiding harmful behaviours such as smoking. People can, in fact, pursue healthy lifestyles outside of competitive sport as long as they find alternative forms of moderate physical exercise through recreation or engage in active work. Active participants gain greater health benefits from participation than volunteers and attendees since they get more exercise. Interestingly, neither participants or non-participants see weight control or smoking as major factors in the state of their health.

The sense of healthiness due to sport is not matched by quantified measures of change in health observed using standard metrics and processes for gathering and evaluating evidence of impacts, such as a change in the number of days lost to illness annually.

Sport has a significant impact on the Canadian economy, estimated at about \$16 billion per annum. Like other activities where people have an expressed preference and which leads to significant spending, it has an economy wide impact through their choice of goods and services for consumption while they take part in sports.

Sport participation does not necessarily create economic growth but rather reflects people's *preferences* on where to spend their money. There may be a specific impact (for example, on the people who work in businesses that derive revenue from sports) when sport is absent, but there is not likely to be a negative economy wide impact because people will simply spend their money elsewhere if not on sport. In this sense, it is unclear whether promoting more participation in sports would yield strong *net* economic benefits.

On the other hand, the skill, health and psychological benefits derived by participants from their involvement in sport may make them on average to be more skillful, better focused and motivated workers. If true, this would result in increased labour productivity and performance in the workplace that on a large enough scale would measurably increase GDP and raise our

standard of living. However, our survey did not clearly establish these benefits for participants compared with non participants.

Despite the lack of quantified evidence of impacts on individuals people participate in large numbers because they like to participate, and feel strongly that it enriches their life. People who participate in sport as competitors, volunteers and attendees alike, believe that it adds much to their personal and social lives.

Sports has an unambiguous social benefit and stimulates social cohesion. It brings together families. It encourages people to interact with others outside their neighbourhood and in the broader community. It brings together people of different social backgrounds, even if it is not seen as breaking down economic barriers. Participants are also more likely to see sport as having spillover benefits to the broader society, such as health and skills gains, and improvements in social cohesion, than people who do not participate. Since so many Canadians participate in sport and ascribe these benefits, that they constitute a large part of our population and our society, their shared perception or observation of societal benefits is self-fulfilling.

12. Implications for Future Action

The evidence is compelling that amateur sport strengthens Canada and Canadians with important personal, social and economic benefits. Governments, communities, families and individuals alike have good reason to value and support participation in amateur sport based on the findings of this report.

More research is needed to refine our understanding of exactly *how* amateur sport participation causes the changes in health, skills, social cohesion and economic performance that have been identified in this report. With further study it will be possible to isolate dimensions of the impact of sport participation that provide the basis for developing targeted policies and programs.⁴⁰ The findings from this study suggest that additional research will yield results that will provide valuable information that can lead directly to program savings in many areas.

Given the significance of amateur sport and its potential for further beneficial impacts if participation is expanded the government of Canada needs to consider how it might take action in future to increase participation across the country.

This study indicates that governments would be well advised to consider their sport policy within the context of the larger health, education, skills and labour market development policy framework. This holistic approach is needed to ensure that investments in sport can reinforce and heighten the skills, health, social and economic benefits identified through this study.

Success will require engagement of other governments, communities and groups that represent populations that are significantly underrepresented today in the ranks of amateur sport participants. The engagement process will require investment but the potential rewards are great.

⁴⁰ For example, research that uncovers more about how sport programs can improve academic performance and the social adjustment of individuals after high school; enhance physiological and psychological health; support family and community development; and contribute to reducing crime and improving the economies of Canadian towns and cities would provide an empirical basis for targeted policy and program investments. See Susan E. Vail, *Promoting the Benefits of Sport: A Collection of Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles and Reports*, Prepared for Federal Provincial-Territorial Sport Committee, Work Group #6 (Vail and Associates: January 25, 2005), p. 3.