

MONITORING & TRACKING THE FIELD

CFLRI'S BULLETIN SERIES MONITORING SPORT AND RECREATION IN CANADA

Organizational capacity in Sport Organizations

The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's 2020-2021 *Sport Organizations Survey* asked administrators in sport organizations about perceptions about their organizational capacity, in terms of adequate human resources to fulfill the organization's mandate and financial resources for sustainability. This study surveyed sport organizations at a national, provincial, territorial, and community level.

In terms of human resource capacity, sport organizations were asked about their perceptions that their organization has sufficient staffing and human resources to fulfill its mandate of providing quality sport programs, related to:

- administrative staff;
- managerial staff;
- executive or board members;
- coaching, officiating, and other technical staff; and,
- volunteers.

Sufficient human resources

Generally speaking, between one-quarter and one-half of sport organizations report having sufficient staffing and human resources to provide quality programming to a *great extent*, and very few organizations (20% or less) say that do *not* have sufficient resources *at all*. Table 1 describes the findings in more detail.



Table 1: Percentage of organizations indicating sufficient human resources to provide quality sport programs

	A great extent	Some extent	Not at all	Don't know/ Not applicable
Administrative staff	35%	42%	13%	10%
Managerial staff	37%	36%	14%	14%
Executive or Board members	50%	34%	10%	6%
Coaching, officiating, technical staff	33%	53%	10%	4%
Volunteers	22%	49%	20%	9%

Source: CFLRI, 2020-2021 Sport Organizations survey

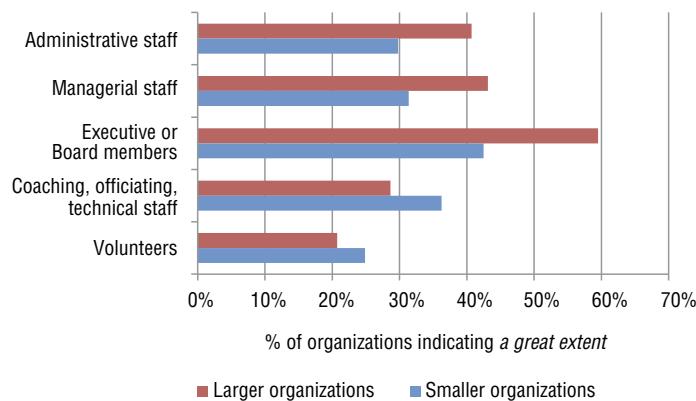
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Region – Organizational perception about staff or human resource capacity to provide quality sport programming does not differ regionally in comparison to the national average.

Organizational size – Organizations were categorized based on the number of registrants or participants that they serve (i.e., 150 or less registrants or participants and greater than 150). With this in mind, a greater proportion of larger organizations feel that they have sufficient managerial staff, executive, or board members to provide quality sport programming to a *great extent*, whereas there were no significant differences between smaller and larger organizations in terms of sufficiency of other types of human resources.

Figure 1: Percentage of organizations indicating sufficient human resources to provide quality sport programs by organizational size



Source: CFLRI, 2020-2021 Sport Organizations survey

Sufficient financial resources

In the context of providing quality sport programs, sport organizations were also asked about their views on whether they had sufficient financial resources for:

- the organizational infrastructure on day-to-day activities;
- the governance of the organizations (e.g., Board of directors, committees);
- facilities and venues;
- the development of coaches and leaders;
- the development of athletes;
- media exposure, promotion and communications-related activities;
- increasing the number of participants;
- gender equity initiatives;
- inclusion and accessibility;
- concussion or injury prevention, and return-to-play protocols;
- safe sport; and,
- new procedures implemented as a result of COVID-19 protocols.

Table 2 describes the ratings of each of these factors. Notably, a sizeable percentage of organizations report *not* having sufficient financial resources for key activities like supporting facilities and venues, developing coaches, leaders and athletes, for increasing the number of participants, or for promotional efforts.

Table 2: Percentage of organizations indicating sufficient financial resources to provide quality sport programs

Support of the:	A great extent	Some extent	Not at all	Don't know/ Not applicable
Organizational capacity				
Organizational infrastructure	20%	59%	16%	5%
Governance of the organization	31%	38%	19%	12%
Facilities and venues				
Support of facilities and venues	14%	47%	29%	10%
Development				
Development of coaches and leaders	13%	51%	29%	7%
Development of athletes	14%	49%	30%	6%
Promotion and recruitment				
Media exposure, promotion and communications-related activities	9%	38%	46%	7%
Recruitment of participants	11%	44%	41%	4%
Equity, inclusion, access				
Gender equity initiatives	27%	34%	22%	17%
Inclusion and accessibility	22%	37%	27%	14%
Safety				
Concussion, injury prevention, return-to-play protocols	29%	38%	19%	14%
Safe sport	43%	41%	11%	5%
New procedures implemented as a result of COVID-19 protocols	29%	50%	17%	4%

Source: CFLRI, 2020-2021 Sport Organizations survey

Region – There is only one significant regional difference related to perceptions about sufficient resources; compared to the national average, a higher percentage of sport organizations in Ontario indicate that they do not have sufficient financial resources for the development of coaches and leaders.

Organizational size – Sufficient financial capacity to provide quality sport programming does not differ by the size of the organization; large organizations (e.g., 150 participants or less) report similar levels of sufficient financial resources as do smaller organizations.

Compared to the national average, a higher percentage of sport organizations in Ontario indicate that they do not have sufficient financial resources for the development of coaches and leaders.



Discussion

Volunteers are a key component of sport organizations' operational capability. Volunteers support organizations in various ways, for example, as coaches, officials, administrators, or as management support. According to the 2018 General Social Survey, volunteers contributed 105 hours on average annually towards sports and recreation prior to the pandemic.¹ According to more recent findings from the CFLRI, approximately one-quarter (27%) of Canadian adults volunteered in a sport related activity and devoted 103 hours/year on average.² In Sport for Life's *Impacts of COVID-19 on Local Sport Organizations* study, 40% local sport organizations reported that they were predominantly volunteer-based and, as a result, did not qualify for provincial or federal emergency supports.³ The COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on many sport organizations as public health restrictions forced some to either close or operate at reduced capacity. The pandemic has contributed to challenges with human resourcing as many of these organizations have experienced difficulties with the retention of staff and volunteers, which may have been in part due to illness and/or trepidation about returning to work. While many sport organizations in this study agreed to some extent that they have a sufficient number of volunteers, about 1 in 5 disagree with this statement. In addition to highlighting human resource challenges, sport organizations in this study also identify a number of financial challenges as well. Specifically, roughly 3 out of 10 sport organizations report having

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insufficient financial resources for the support of facilities/venues and the development of coaches, leaders, and athletes. In addition, slightly less than half of organizations report having insufficient financial resources for promotion (46%) and recruitment of participants (41%). Indeed, sport organizations, in an international study, have also communicated the need for promotion to increase membership and engagement (8%) and long-term funding commitment from government (7%).³ Despite the difficult circumstances, some sport organizations have been able to enact necessary changes allowing them to continue to provide some services and programs to their memberships (e.g., through virtual programming), and yet for many others, the ability to offer programs and services during the pandemic was significantly hindered. As restrictions continue to lift across many jurisdictions, it will be necessary to monitor whether these reported human resource and financial challenges are sustained over time.



FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS



Consider funding for development

Continuous development programs for coaches are important for the provision of quality programming and athlete development. Improving knowledge and skills will help to ensure that coaches/instructors are able to effectively deliver a positive sporting experience for athletes. It is, perhaps, not surprising that coaches'/instructors' ability to provide quality training was significantly challenged by disruptions due to COVID-19. Sport organizations will need continuous investments from governments for the development of coaches, particularly in the post-pandemic era.³⁻⁵ Training initiatives for coaches can, for example, focus on providing education about how to deliver quality programming while adhering to public health guidelines to ensure that training is done in a safe environment, or how to provide virtual programming. Similarly, support is needed for the development of athletes, many of whom may be returning to play for the first time since the pandemic and may have experienced a decline in skills and abilities.⁶



Consider investing in promotion and communications

Sport organizations may need to consider creating partnerships and collaborations with other key stakeholders (e.g., other sport organizations, recreation, public health, and educational institutions) for the development and/or implementation of strategies to promote their programs and services with the aim of encouraging participation and for the retention of membership following COVID-related disruptions.⁷ Research has shown that fears/anxiety regarding safety or participating at indoor facilities or on team sports are prevalent, and as such educational initiatives could include messaging about new practices and/or protocols in place to ensure the safety of participants. Sport organizations could also consider adopting a health promotion approach which focuses on communicating the importance of physical activity and sport for mental and physical health. Innovative promotion strategies, such as the use of social media, could also be an effective means for attracting volunteers, particularly among the younger demographics.

References

¹ Hahmann T. 2021. Volunteering counts: Formal and informal contributions of Canadians in 2018. Insights on Canadian Society. Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 75-006-X. Available from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00002-eng.pdf?st=xNTZxy3Z>

² Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. 2022. Volunteering in Sport. Relaying the Research. 2020 Sport Monitor. Available from: <https://cflri.ca/volunteering-sport>

³ Sport for Life. 2020. Impacts of COVI-19 on Local Sport Organizations-Nationwide Results. Available from: <https://sportforlife.ca/facing-covid-19-together/>

⁴ Santos F, Cardoso A, Pereira P, Strachan L. 2021. Coach Training Within the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Potential Pathways. *Front Psychol.* Vol. 12. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8116699/>

⁵ Elliott et al. 2021. Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on youth sport in Australia and consequences for future participation and retention. *BMC Public Health.* Vol. 21. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7935002/>

⁶ Washif et al. 2021. Training During the COVID-19 Lockdown: Knowledge, Beliefs, and Practices of 12,526 Athletes from 142 Countries and Six Continents. *Sports Med.* Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8536915/>

⁷ Donaldson et al. 2021. Challenges of Partnering to Promote Health through Sport. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health.* Vol. 18(3). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18137193>



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