

Sport & Physical Activity - Latvian Community

Basic Facts:

- The Republic of Latvia is a country in Northern Europe.
- Latvia regained its independence from the Soviet Union in August 1991 and eventually joined the EU in 2004.
- The capital city is Riga.
- In 2003 the population was estimated to be just over 2.3 million people.
- The Latvian climate is maritime with cool summers and wet, moderate winters.

Demographics:

- Only around 60% of the population is ethnic Latvian. The remainder includes 29% who are ethnically Russian, the largest national minority in Latvia. Minorities from other countries such as Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania and Poland also live in Latvia.
- Latvian is the only official language in Latvia, but Russian is widely spoken among the Russian community.

Immigration:

- Worker Registration figures indicate that since 2004, **31,713** Latvians have registered to work in England. The major areas of settlement are in Lincolnshire, West Yorkshire, Humber, Kent and Central The largest of these being Lincolnshire where agricultural industry has attracted workers.

Health:

- The total expenditure on health as a % of GDP was 6.4% in 2005.
- Statistics provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for 2006 show that life expectancy at birth for males was 65 years and for females was 76 years.
- A 2008 report provided by the International Association for the Study of Obesity showed that, 34.2% of males were considered to be overweight, and 13% obese, and 27.1% of females were overweight and 17.5% obese.

Religion:

- The population is mostly Christian (majority being Lutheran, Catholic and Russian Orthodox). Another religion is Dievturi (The Godkeepers), which has historical roots based on pre-Christian era mythology.

Physical Activity and Sport:

- Many Latvians spend weekends and holidays by the sea or in the countryside where outdoor activities such as swimming, cycling, walking, sailing and fishing are very popular.
- The most popular sports are basketball, ice hockey and athletics. Streetball is also increasing in popularity as are volleyball, handball, biathlon, luge and bobsleigh.
- Latvia won three medals in the Olympic Games in Beijing (gold, silver and bronze in BMX cycling, athletics and weightlifting respectively).
- Many Latvians came to Britain as refugees in 1945 and settled here in small communities.
- Riga Volleyball Club is based in Coventry and Warwick and was founded in 1947 by Latvian exiles seeking work. As the original players retired, the club has become more multinational. Its website now advertises in Polish seeking new players from within the strong Midlands Polish community.

Further Information:

- An initial points of contact for the Latvian community is the Latvian National Council in Great Britain as well as the Baltic Council in Great Britain which represents the Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian communities.
- The Labrit information website is also a useful source of information.

For more information about partnership working with the Latvian community please contact Sporting Equals on **0121 777 1375**.

For further details please contact:

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