



**CANADIAN
WOMEN & SPORT**

PROUDLY IN
PARTNERSHIP WITH



THE RALLY REPORT

**Encouraging Action to Improve Sport
for Women and Girls**

JUNE 2020



PRIMARY RESEARCH CONDUCTED WITH IMI INTERNATIONAL

CALL TO ACTION FROM CANADIAN WOMEN & SPORT

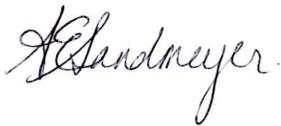
The call to play, move, and compete is a rallying cry that excites us, challenges us, and inspires us to come together. We believe in the power of sport to help us push boundaries and build connections as Canadians. For girls and women, sport is a first step to leadership—helping them develop the confidence and resilience they bring to their education, careers, and communities. Value and support for women’s engagement in sport become a bridge to gender equity in society overall.

If we want sport in Canada to reach its full potential, women and girls must be involved as participants, leaders and contributors. When we can truly say every Canadian is welcome in the circle of sport, regardless of their gender, we will have changed sport for the better—from the bench, to the boardroom, and beyond.

Canadian Women & Sport last produced a report like this in 2016. We believe it’s time to continue the conversation: to acknowledge the advancement we’ve made towards gender equity over the past few years, and to dig into the data that shows us we still have work to do.

We invite you to rally with us—to drive change and build the momentum we need to achieve gender equity. Let’s use our collective voices to advocate for sport that is inclusive and reflects our values. Let’s leverage our respective influence to create a sport system that is built by, with and for women and girls. Together, we will change the game so everyone wins.

YOURS IN EQUITABLE SPORT,



Allison Sandmeyer-Graves
CEO



Nathalie Cook
Board Chair



INTRODUCTION FROM CANADIAN TIRE JUMPSTART CHARITIES

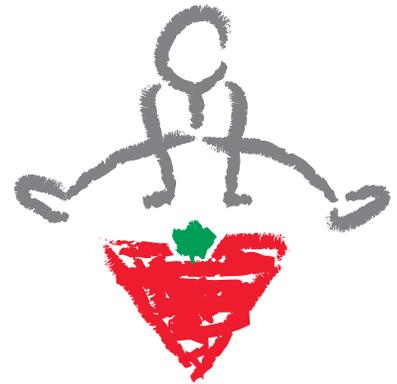
At Jumpstart, we are committed to ensuring kids in need have equal access to sports and physical activity – an equal chance to be their best. Beyond physical fitness, there are countless benefits to participating in sport and recreation. Sport fosters valuable life skills like confidence, resilience, and teamwork, and helps kids grow up to become strong leaders in their own communities and beyond.

We are focused on removing barriers for thousands of young girls every year, and consistently help an equal number of girls and boys in financial need participate in sport and recreation. Jumpstart's efforts to level the playing field include partnerships with organizations including Canadian Women & Sport. Since 2018, we have worked together to offer programming specific to girls in sport, as well as on industry research, all in an effort to help better understand this group and to help girls stay enrolled and engaged in sport and physical activity.

We are proud to support The Rally Report, the premier study on the status of women and girls sport participation in Canada. The report delivers the latest participation levels for Canadian girls and women, along with insights on the barriers keeping girls away from participating. Together, we are cultivating a stronger future for everyone and sport is the perfect platform from which to do this.



Scott Fraser
President, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities



Jumpstart[®]
Bon départ[™]



SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Advancing gender equity is a team effort. The Rally Report would not be possible without the collaboration of Canadian Women & Sport with our partners. We are especially grateful for support from Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities and IMI International.

THANK YOU



Dr. Catherine Sabiston (University of Toronto) provided expert stewardship to the project and authored the report. Her expertise and commitment were instrumental to its realization. From the beginning, Dr. Cheri Bradish (Ryerson University) joined in championing the project. We are grateful for her vision and support.

This report came to life thanks to the vision of the Canadian Women & Sport Board of Directors. Our thanks go to Nathalie Cook (Chair), Tanya Mruck (Vice-Chair), Althea Arsenault, Bill Cooper, Deidra Dionne, Rochelle Grayson, Leanne Nicolle, Rebecca Shanks and Camille Wallace.

We also acknowledge our Impact Research Committee, co-chaired by Dr. Sabiston and Dr. Bradish, for their thoughtful feedback and guidance. This expert advisory group includes: Tanya Mruck, Leanne Nicolle, Dr. Alison Doherty (Western University), Dr. Janelle Joseph (University of Toronto), Dr. Tara McHugh (University of Alberta), Dr. Norm O'Reilly (University of Guelph) and Dr. Cathy Van Ingen (Brock University).

And finally, we appreciate the Canadian Women & Sport staff, whose tremendous dedication and hard work are helping to bring about real and meaningful change.





INTRODUCTION

Gender inequity in sport has a long history in Canada. From the 1800s to today, girls and women have been at a disadvantage in the way sport has been taught, played, and watched. This history has propelled continuing disproportionate opportunities, values, and quality of experiences in sport.

The Rally Report, produced in partnership with Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, shows that the need persists for widespread attention as well as for deliberate and sustained action to drive measurable improvements in gender equity in sport. This does not discount the efforts being made throughout the sport system and beyond to improve policies, change practices and enhance conditions for equity in sport. If anything, this report underscores the vital importance of these activities and encourages more leaders and organizations to join this movement.

This report builds on the 2016 “Women in Sport: A Report On The Status Of Female Sport Participation In Canada” report, developed in partnership by Canadian Women & Sport (formerly CAAWS) and the Dairy Farmers of Canada, and presents updated statistics and insights. The evidence is clear: girls continue to participate in sport at lower levels compared to boys, sport dropout during adolescence is still prevalent and dramatic, and many barriers linked to women’s participation, leadership, and influence remain. This report provides an overview of this landscape, along with an evidence-based list of actions that parents, coaches, officials, administrators, boards and other stakeholders can take to act on the evidence and create positive change.

In 2019, Ministers of Sport at federal and provincial/territorial levels of government “endorsed a vision for all women and girls to be equitably represented, recognized, and served across all aspects of Canadian sport.”¹ The Government of Canada set a vision of achieving gender equality at all levels of sport by 2035.² We are hopeful that these commitments signal a new era of support for gender equity and inclusion in sport across the sport system. The Rally Report supports this change by providing data to set the foundation and by pointing to the path forward.

The need persists for widespread attention as well as for deliberate and sustained action to drive measurable improvements in gender equity in sport.



METHODOLOGY

To collect these data, over 10,000 Canadians (75% of whom are girls and women) age 13–63 responded to a survey conducted by IMI International on behalf of Canadian Women & Sport. This report explores current trends in sport participation with a specific focus on the target groups of girls ages 6–18. Sport participation is any participation in organized team or individual sport at least once a week over the last 12 months. This definition is consistent with previous reports.^{3,4} Any reference to girls and women in this report should be read as self-identified gender, not assigned biological sex. Due to low response rates to the survey from individuals with a gender identity other than man or woman, perspectives from across the gender spectrum are unfortunately not represented in this report.

Statistics on leadership in sport were obtained from a separate survey to 90 nationally-funded sport organizations. Public reports and research publications were used to provide additional context to the findings. Full methodology is at www.womenandsport.ca.



THIS REPORT PRESENTS:



- Responses from parents of girls age 6–12
- Personal reflections and perceptions from girls age 13–18
- Support data from Canadian adults age 19–63
- Leadership data from nationally funded sport organizations, Coaching Association of Canada, USports and Canadian Collegiate Athletics Association
- Statistics from publicly available documents and research publications



SPORT PARTICIPATION RATES ARE NOT IMPROVING IN CANADA



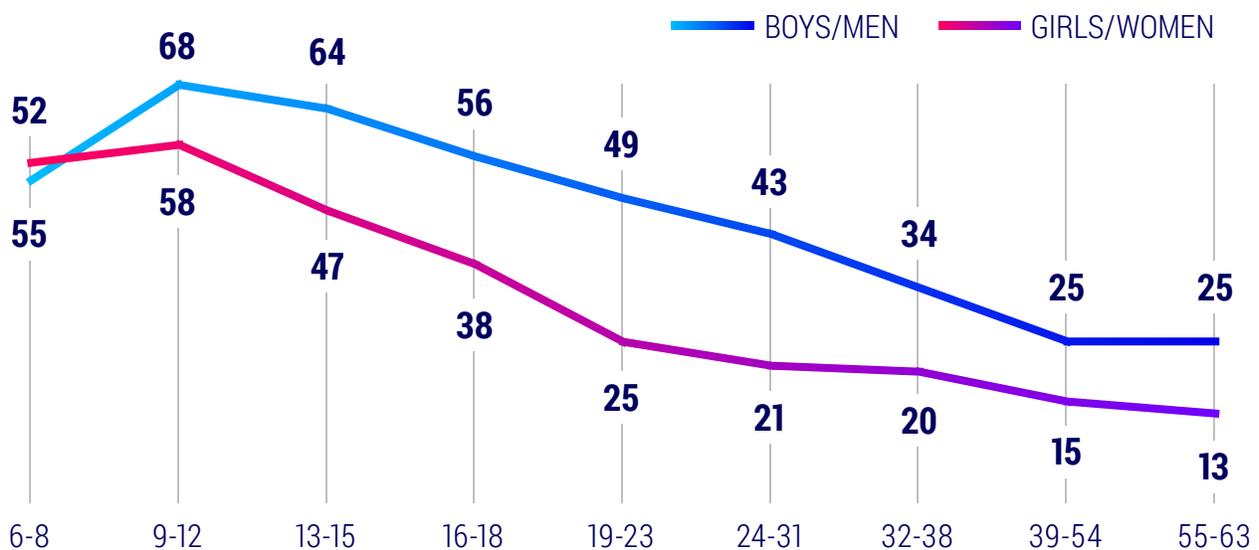
As many as
62% 
of Canadian girls are
not participating in
any kind of sport



In Canada, we should celebrate the many initiatives and increased focus on gender equity and inclusion over the last few years. For example, more opportunities exist for women to participate in different types of sports, groups that have spearheaded entire sport leagues that fight stigmas and cultural norms, and divisions within organized sport that are more inclusive. More events, webinars, and training focused on supporting sport organizations in inclusive and equitable actions have surfaced. These efforts reflect important and meaningful work to expand opportunities for girls and women in sport. But, as the data in this report shows, all this has yet to translate into major change.

Fewer Canadian youth are participating in sport. In 2010–2011, parents reported 74% of children and youth participate in sport.⁵ Based on the current report data, this rate has fallen by at least 14% over the last decade. Under 60% of boys and girls participate in sport now. This rate is much lower for girls. As the graph below shows, 57% of young girls age 6–12, 47% of girls age 13–15, and 38% for girls age 16–18 participate in sport weekly.

PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS REPORTING WEEKLY SPORT PARTICIPATION



These declining participation rates, both over time and as girls get older, are troubling and showcase a critical problem that we must address. Fewer girls in sport now translates into fewer girls and women involved in sport at all roles as spectators, coaches, officials, administrators, and managers to name a few. We must identify and sustain support, effort and expertise to defeat the long-term inequities.

When girls drop out of sport during adolescence, they miss out on the many benefits that would set them up for long-term health, well-being, academic and career successes. Unfortunately, the survey data show participation rates decrease as girls get older. The steepest decline in participation appears in early adolescence since there is a 22% difference in the participation rates between girls age 9–11 and those age 15–18. The retention of girls and women in sport is a critical concern.



SPORT PARTICIPATION IS DECREASING AMONG CANADIAN WOMEN.

In 1992, just over half of women age 15 or older were participating in sport.

In 2010, sport participation among women dropped to 35%.

Currently, 18% of women age 16–63 are involved in sport.

A similar number of boys and girls start out in sport, but more boys are involved in sport as of age 9–12 and more boys stay involved in sport through to late adolescence—and across the lifespan.

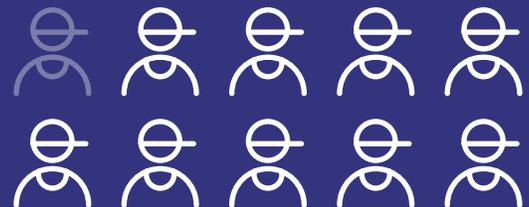
ACROSS ADOLESCENCE



1 IN 3

GIRLS DROPS OUT OF SPORT

VS



1 IN 10

BOYS DROPS OUT OF SPORT

Girls are less likely to get involved and stay involved in sport compared to boys. This comparison underscores the need for a gender lens to be used in sport. Girls and women continue to experience and benefit from sport differently than boys and men do.



PARTICIPATION RATES ARE INFLUENCED BY MANY INTERSECTING FACTORS

MANY FACTORS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH SPORT PARTICIPATION. IN THE CURRENT SURVEY:

- Girls in homes with household incomes over \$100,000 were more likely to participate in sport (62%) compared to 44% of girls in homes with incomes under \$50,000.
- Girls who have parents/guardians who are involved in sport are more likely to participate themselves. Compared to girls whose parents are not involved in sport, girls are over 3 times more likely to be in sport if they have parents who are in sport.
- Girls living in urban areas are slightly more likely to participate in sport at younger ages (59% versus 54% in rural areas), but similar rates of participation were noted among girls during adolescence.

Unfortunately, girls and women facing additional barriers had a lower rate of response to the survey. This limited the data of how ethnicity, ability and sexual orientation combine with gender to create additional and unique obstacles to participation in sport. This is an essential area of research and action, and so initial trends are reported here to inform conversation and initiate focused attention.



Credit: Canadian Paralympic Committee

ETHNICITY:

- Girls self-identifying as Indigenous reported the lowest participation at 24%
- Approximately 32-34% of age 13-23 girls self-identifying as Asian, White, and South Asian ethnicities reported sport participation, compared to 45% of Black girls.

ABILITY

- Parents of girls with a disability reported their daughters were similarly involved in sport compared to able-bodied peers
- Adult women who reported a disability were less involved in sport (13% versus 20% able-bodied).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- Sexual orientation was not a factor in sport participation



INTERSECTING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE GIRLS' SPORT PARTICIPATION

	MORE LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE	LESS LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE
THEY ARE/HAVE... 	Younger than 12 years	13-18 years
	Able-bodied	A disability
	Caucasian, South Asian, Asian, Black	Indigenous
	Any sexual orientation	Any sexual orientation
THEIR HOMES HAVE... 	Parents who participate in sport	Parents who do not participate in sport
	Income more than \$100,000	Incomes less than \$50,000
	Urban or rural setting	Urban or rural setting

These participation-level findings are important to move forward the agenda on gender equity and inclusion in girls and women sport. Relatively little is known about sport experiences, barriers and facilitators for girls from underserved groups—including those who may face barriers related to (in)visible disability, race and ethnicity, socio-economic position, gender and sexual identity, and others. An intersectionality approach to data considers the variety of layers of an individual's identity and how they impact different experiences. It is important that all people involved in or influencing sport recognize that barriers to participation go beyond gendered challenges.

It is essential to consider how different girls and women experience sport, how they encounter barriers, and how they benefit and access support to improve inclusion of *all* girls and women in *all* sectors of sport.

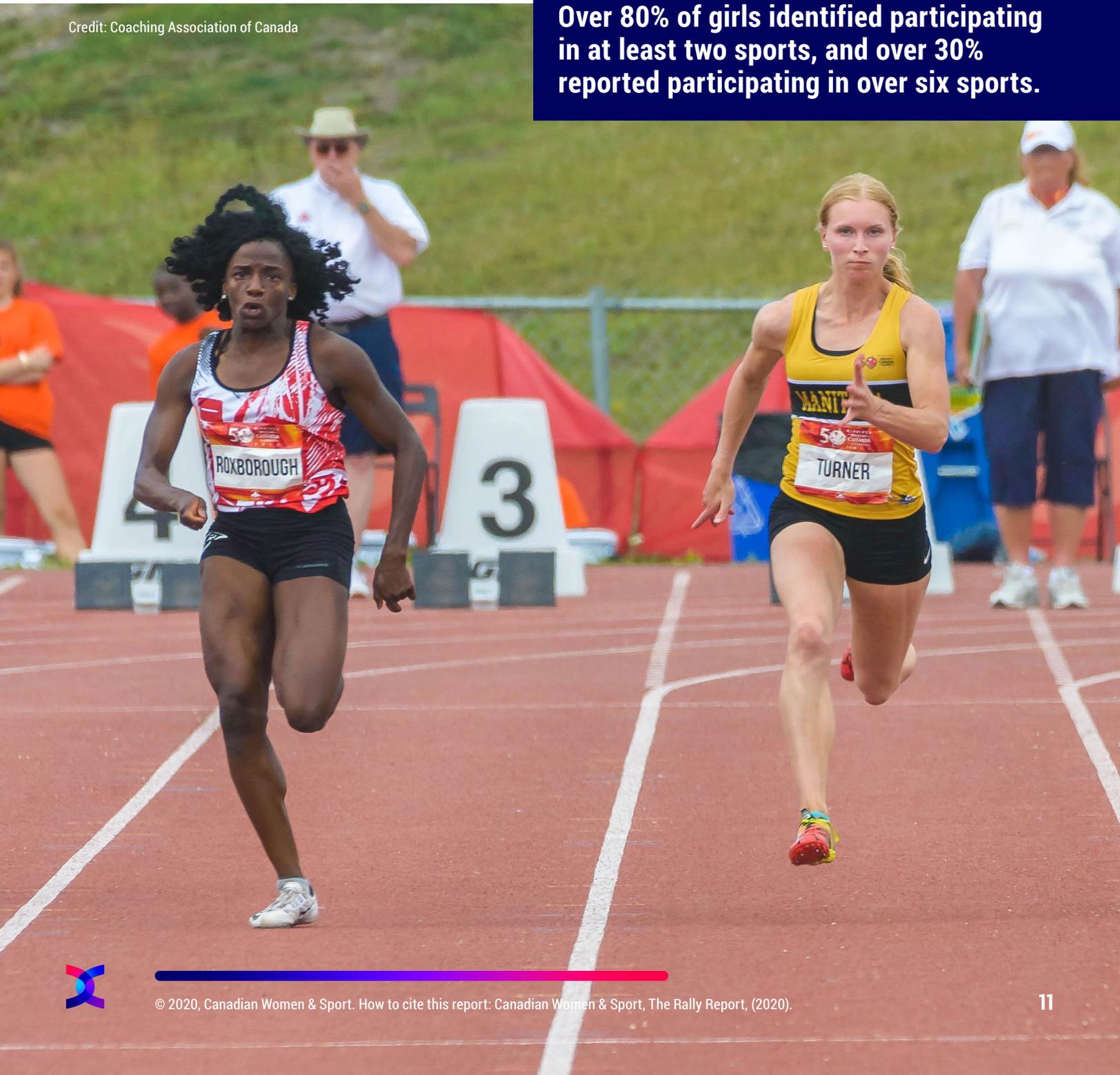


WHEN GIRLS PARTICIPATE IN SPORT, THEY PARTICIPATE IN MANY

Early exposure to a diverse array of sports is important for physical health and emotional well-being.⁶ The variety of team and individual sports was extensive. Girls reported participating in an average of four different sports over the year. A diversity of choices, opportunity, availability, and interest are all key factors in retaining girls in sport.⁷⁻⁹

Credit: Coaching Association of Canada

Over 80% of girls identified participating in at least two sports, and over 30% reported participating in over six sports.



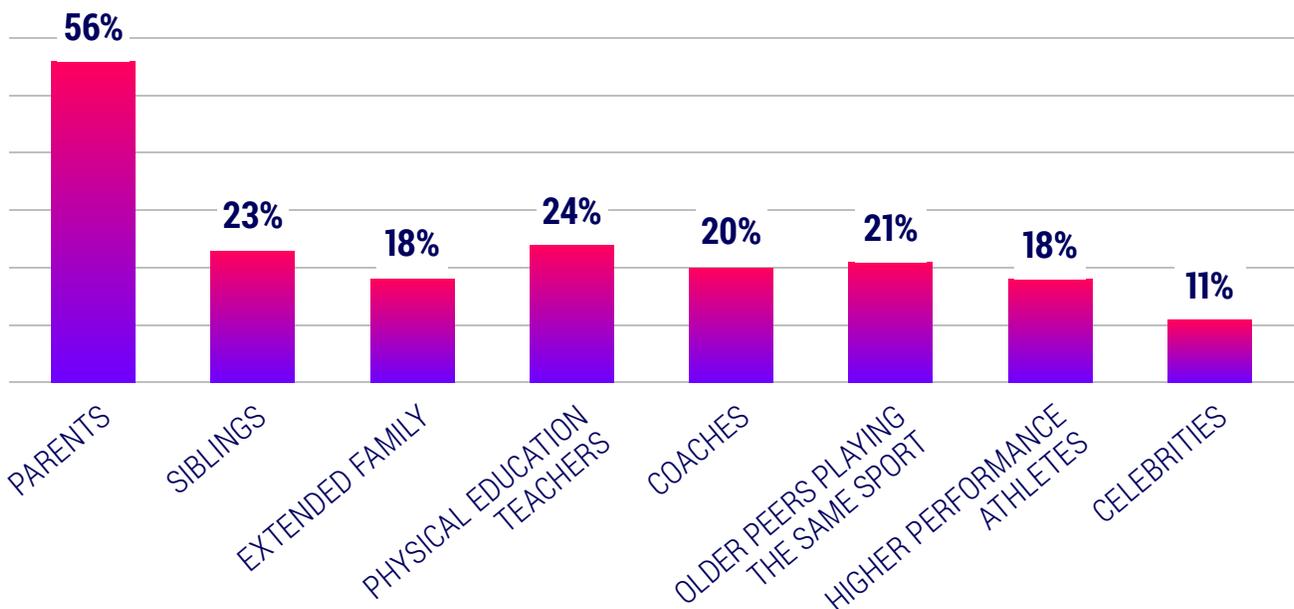
GIRLS IDENTIFY MANY POSITIVE SPORT INFLUENCES.

Many people are helping to support girls participate in sport, as illustrated below. These influencers can help enhance participation and the quality of sport experiences in several ways, including enrolment, providing feedback, information and education, participating together, and generally being role models. Awareness of the social network reach and influence can result in more girls feeling more supported in their sport pursuits.



Credit: Coaching Association of Canada

IN ADDITION TO PARENTS, GIRLS REPORT A NUMBER OF OTHER PEOPLE WHO POSITIVELY INFLUENCE THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN SPORT



The variety of possible influencers in sport is valuable for positive sport experiences. Research shows that it is particularly important to have same-gender role models because women in influential positions can challenge stereotypes about gender and leadership and offer diverse insight and advice to girls and women.¹⁰

Credit: Coaching Association of Canada

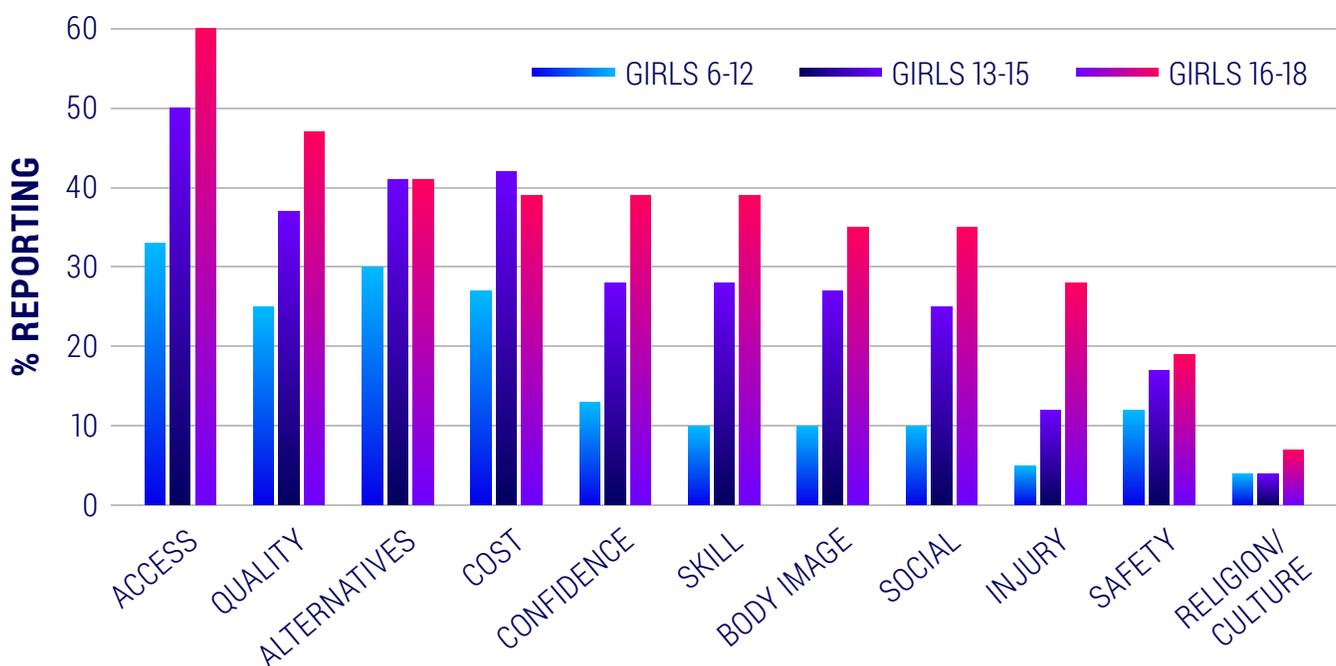


SEVERAL BARRIERS CONTRIBUTE TO DROP OUT – WITH BARRIERS INCREASING THROUGH ADOLESCENCE

The data on participation rates help to illustrate the issue of low participation for girls overall, with further differences based on identity factors. But participation rates alone do not help us understand why low participation persists. To do this, we must look at the barriers reported by the girls.

As the chart shows, the survey responses clearly identified barriers related to access (including lack of time, availability and awareness of sport, and location), interest in non-sport alternatives and other priorities, and cost of participation.

PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS REPORTING SPECIFIC BARRIERS TO SPORT PARTICIPATION



1 IN 3 GIRLS REPORTED...

- low confidence
- negative body image
- perceived lack of skill
- poor perceptions of belonging and feeling unwelcome

1 IN 5 GIRLS REPORTED...

- bullying and safety concerns

1 IN 10 GIRLS REPORTED...

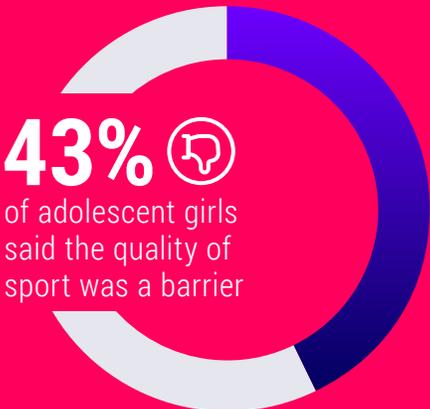
- religion and culture

...AS FACTORS PREVENTING THEM FROM CONTINUING IN SPORT.



Survey responses concerning quality of the sport included these perceptions:

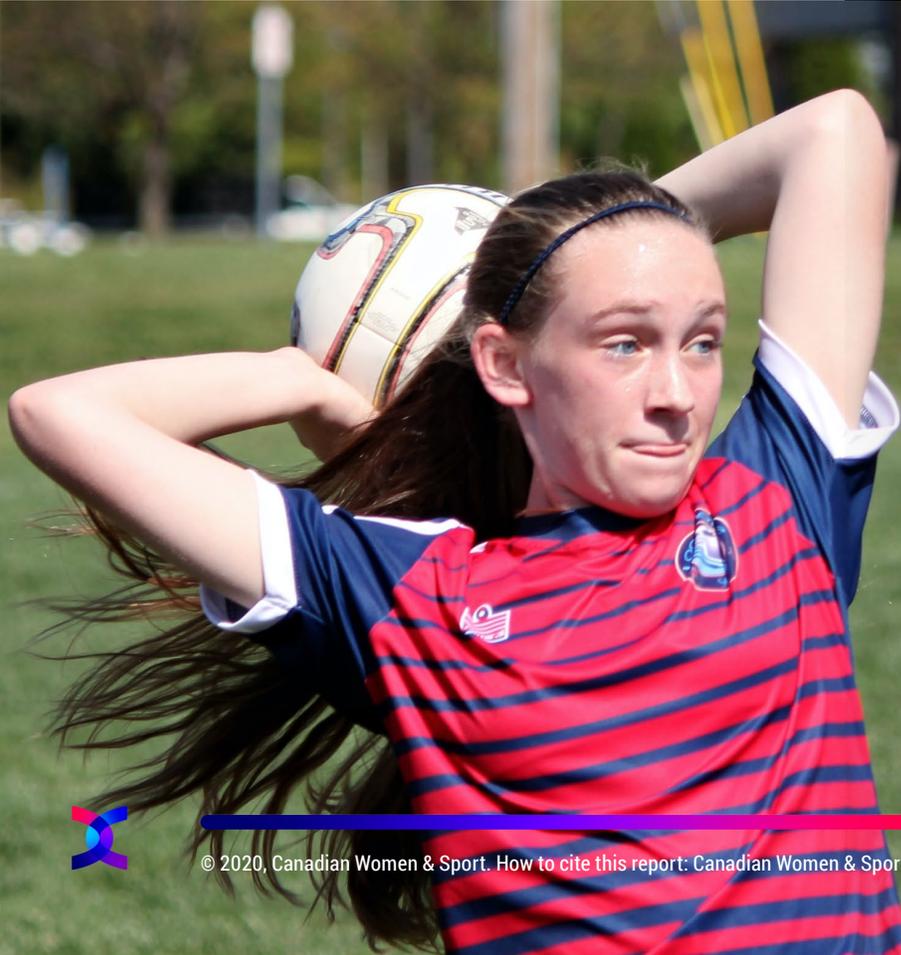
- the sport is not appropriately designed for girls
- quality coaching is needed
- not enough positive role models
- poor overall experiences
- sport may be too competitive.



43% 
of adolescent girls
said the quality of
sport was a barrier

We need to explore further these quality sport perceptions to best interpret the underlying reasons. Comparisons across different sports and types of sports may help us better understand how sport can be most effectively delivered for girls and women.

Barriers of sport quality, self-confidence, body image, skill, social constraints, and injury were reported by many more girls in later adolescence (age 16–18) compared to earlier (age 13–15). When considered with the trends in participation rates, these barriers are likely key reasons why girls disengage and drop out. Research on women and sport reinforces the link between these reported barriers and girls disengaging from and dropping out of sport.^{11,12,13,14,15}



“ *I know every girl did this. We always kind of compare how well they would score or how thin one girl was or overall body image and performance. It was just constant comparing so. I don't know, I just decided to drop sports because it isn't the best environment to be constantly comparing myself.*



FORMER SOCCER PLAYER,
AGE 16 YEARS¹⁶





Credit: Special Olympics Canada

And again, barriers to sport participation may also be different based on important considerations beyond gender and age. Keeping in mind that there was a small sample reporting intersectionality considerations:

- Girls and women who reported a disability were more likely to report lack of confidence, injury, and body image as barriers compared to girls and women without disability;
- Perceptions of cost, access, confidence, lack of feeling belongingness and welcome (social barriers), and safety were more prevalently reported barriers for girls of lower income households;
- More girls from rural communities perceived quality, confidence, skill, and social barriers;
- Other sexual orientation groups identified in the survey (lesbian, gay, polysexual, bisexual, pansexual, Queer, Questioning, asexual) were more likely to report social barriers compared to heterosexual women;
- More women self-reporting as Indigenous identified body image (35% versus 18%) and social (22% versus 13%) barriers compared to all other ethnic groups.

These statistics re-iterate the importance of exploring how sport experiences and participation are affected by many intersecting identity factors that compound beyond gender. To best understand these factors, it would also be helpful to know if girls are participating in sport in the communities in which they identify, if sport opportunities exist for such communities, and how access to and growth of such sport communities can happen.

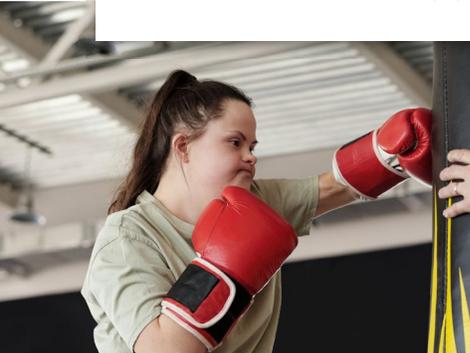
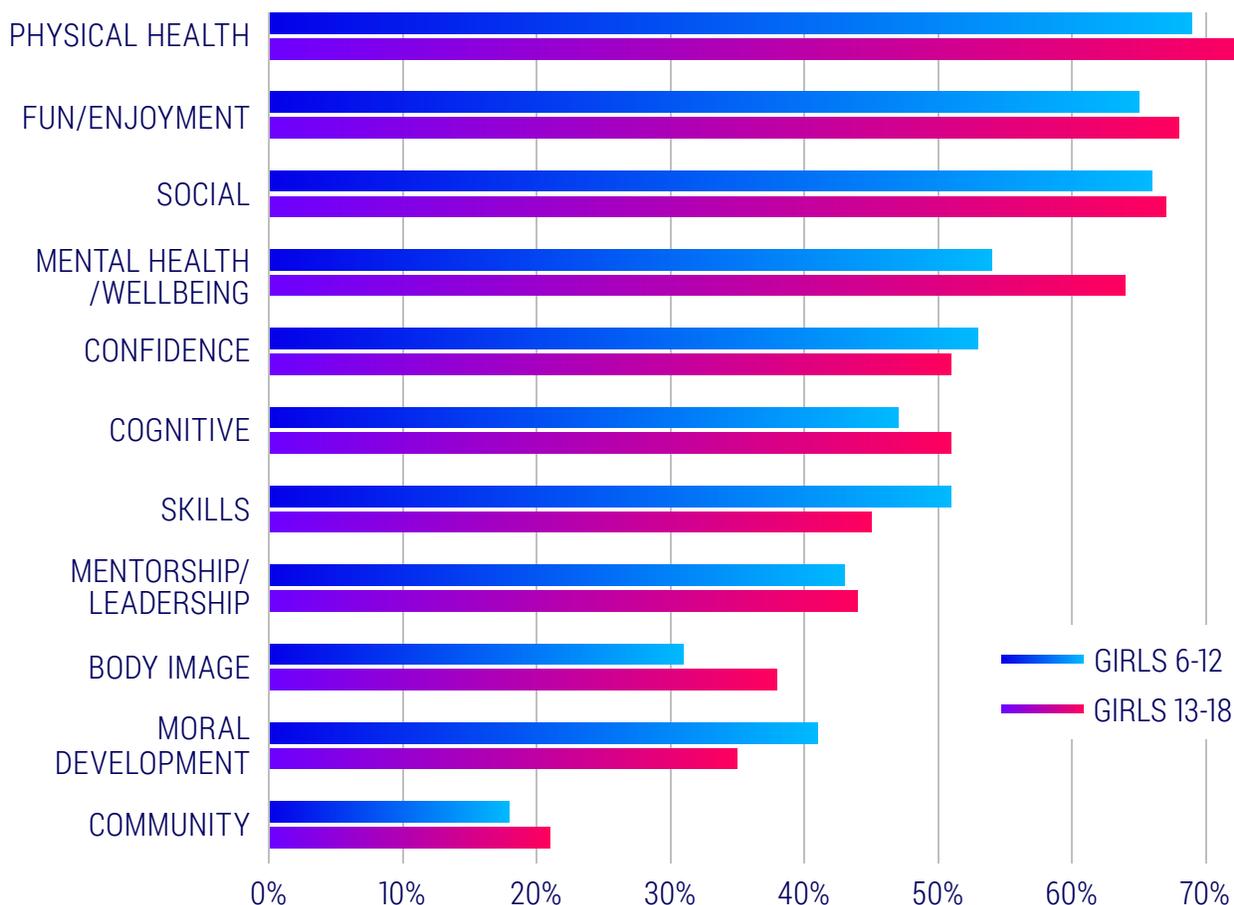
These statistics re-emphasize the importance of exploring how sport experiences and participation are affected by many intersecting identity factors that compound beyond gender.



GIRLS EXPERIENCE MANY BENEFITS TO SPORT PARTICIPATION.

Barriers to sport participation suggest that girls experience unequal opportunities to start and stay in sport. This is unfortunate because sport is the most prevalent extra-curricular and organized activity for adolescents in Canada and it offers many potential benefits. Girls reported experiencing many benefits by participating in sport, as illustrated in the graph.

PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS REPORTING EACH BENEFIT OF SPORT PARTICIPATION



Many of the benefits of sport are reported by at least 40% of the girls surveyed. It is noteworthy that body image and mental health and wellbeing benefits were reported by more adolescents compared to younger girls.

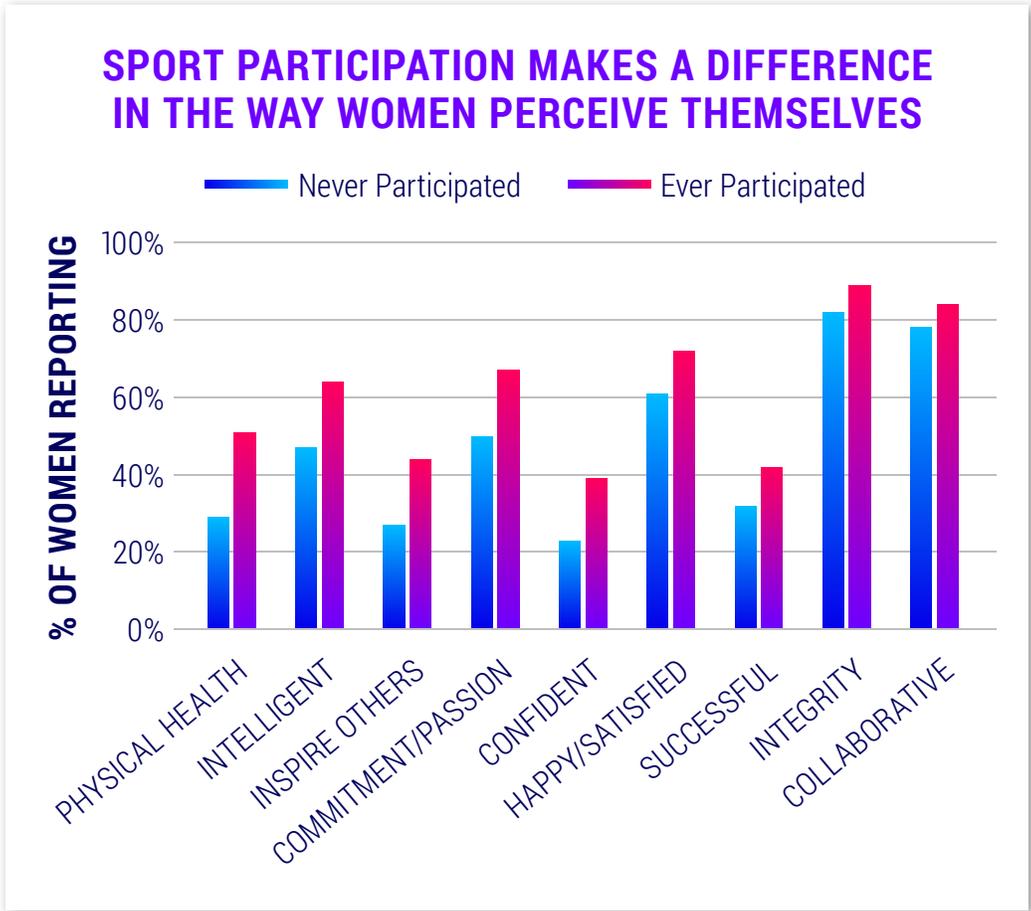


We can target these benefits intentionally to engage girls in sport and help them get the most from their participation. Based on these benefits, it is important that sport opportunities for girls are enjoyable, are delivered in a socially inclusive environment, and build confidence and skills, while maintaining the physical aspect of sport that makes participation unique to most other organized and extra-curricular activities.

Some of the benefits of participating in sport last a long time and may also be realized long after childhood and adolescence. For example, the chart below shows the differences between how women who participated in sport perceive and describe themselves compared to women who did not participate in sport.

It could be argued that sport participation enhances women’s perceptions of many positive attributes that are particularly valuable in leadership positions. The link between sport participation and leadership is well-supported. For example, 94% of executive-level women leaders have played sport and 74% of executive women have reported feeling that sport accelerated their careers.¹⁷

Unfortunately, these benefits are not being fully realised due to the low enrolment and retention of girls as participants in sport. Since the enrolment of girls in sport is low, this can mean fewer women are involved as leaders in sport leaving girls with fewer role models, advisors, and mentors.



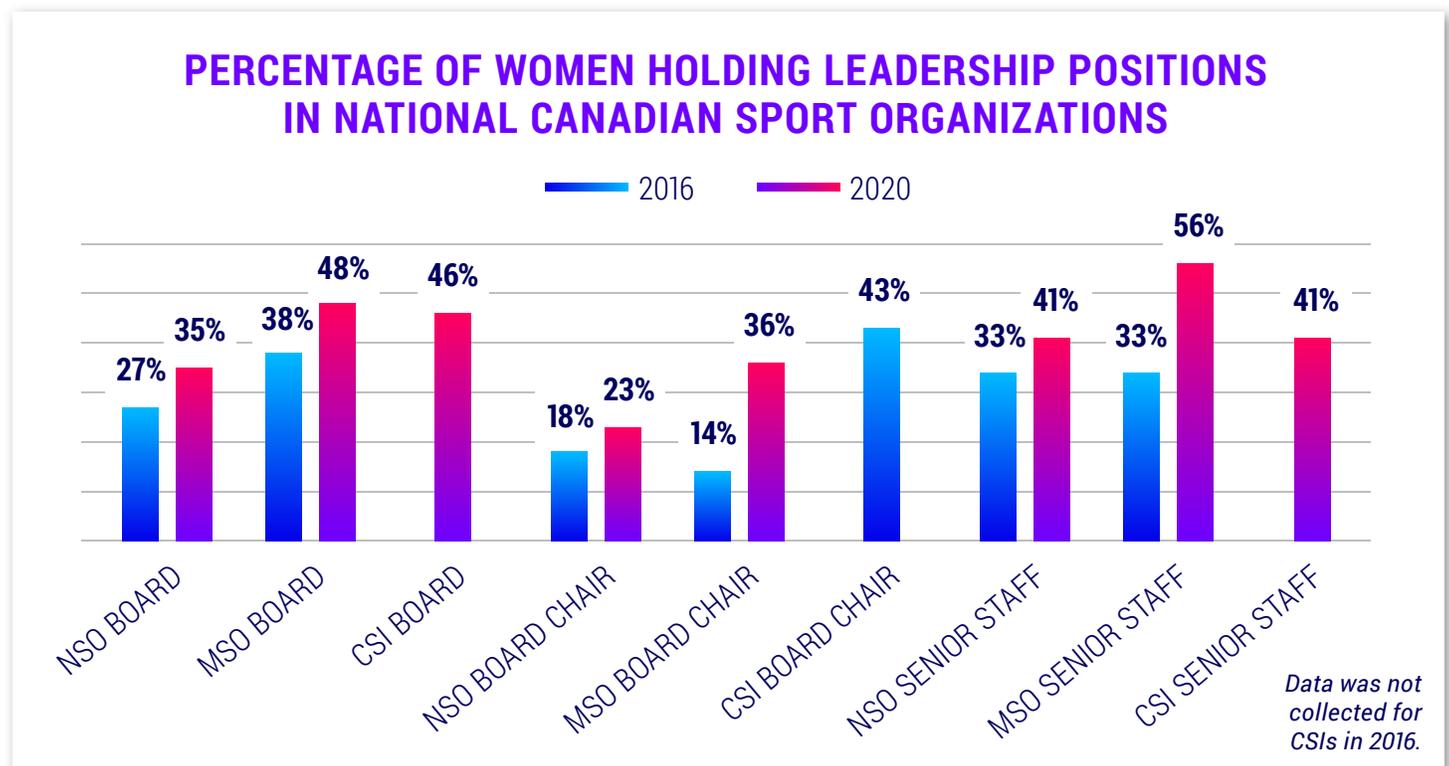
WOMEN IN POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE ARE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT—BUT UNDER-REPRESENTED—ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF SPORT.

The lack of representation of women in leadership roles is a limiting factor for girls’ and women’s participation in sport and quality sport experiences. Organizational productivity and effectiveness may also be limited with fewer women in leadership roles.

Diverse and inclusive organizations are rated as being more effective at decision making, having better reputations, being more connected and supportive, and overall better at revenue generation.^{18,19}

Diversity and inclusion practices are needed to ensure women are intentionally and equitably represented in leadership positions at every level of sport. Yet, women are under-represented as leaders across key constituents of the Canadian sport system, including within National Sport Organizations (NSOs), Multi-Sport Service Organizations (MSOs) and Canadian Sport Institutes (CSIs), as coaches, and as athletic directors in post-secondary institutions across Canada.

Starting with a look at the nationally funded organizations (NSOs, MSOs, CSIs), rates of leadership by women have been rising incrementally since 2016, as illustrated in the chart.³ Though there is still considerable room to improve, many organizations have increased the number of women as board members, board chairs, and senior staff. And yet, only 43% of these organizations have reached parity, and 29% of the organizations have fewer than 30% of women on the board.



Beyond improvements to leadership numbers in these organizations, there are positive levels of commitment to gender equity. The survey also asked organization respondents if they felt sport organizations were improving on issues of inclusivity and safety. An overwhelming majority (85–93%) believe there are positive shifts and improvements in these areas. Given the gaps in participation and leadership that remain, it is troubling that only 51% of sport organizations responded stating that more work and attention are needed to make sport inclusive. More positively, 69% felt more effort is needed to make sport safe for girls and women. More information – through research and documentation and reporting by organizations – is needed to identify how inclusivity and safety concerns can be addressed.



Coaches are the most visible and influential leaders in sport. They shape the day-to-day lived experiences of participants and influence the growth and development of sport. It has been well-documented and a consistent conversation that women are under-represented in coaching roles.^{20,21} The current numbers show that the problem continues, even at the level of training and education.

The Coaching Association of Canada reported that of individuals who identified taking a National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) course and recorded it within the Locker (a dedicated online tracking system) in 2019 only 34% were women, compared to 66% men and 0.1% another gender. With the caveat that these numbers do not include any non-NCCP training entered in the Locker or any training undertaken outside of the Coaching Association of Canada purview, there is an obvious gap in rates of training for women compared to men.

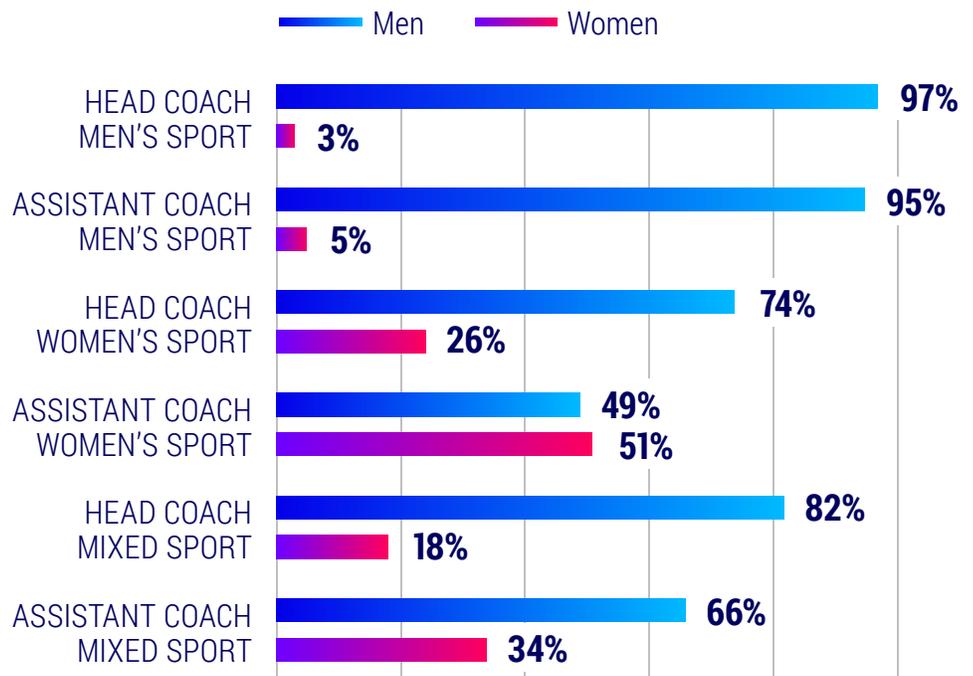
INDIVIDUALS WHO IDENTIFIED TAKING A NATIONAL COACHING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (NCCP) COURSE



The under-representation of women in coaching is echoed at many levels of sport. Member institutions of U Sports and Canadian Collegiate Athletics Association (CCAA) comprise the largest pool of full-time coaching positions. Compared to four years ago, women as a proportion of coaches in post-secondary institutions showed no significant improvement.



PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN COACHES IN U SPORTS AND CCAA





Credit: Coaching Association of Canada

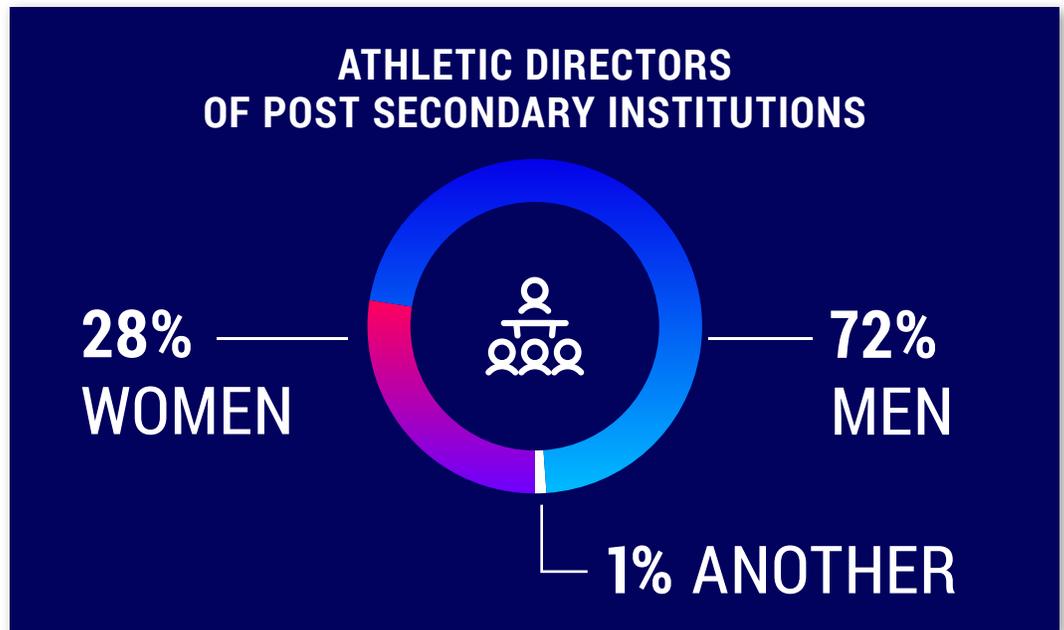
Unfortunately, gender equity in coaching is also not present at the highest level of sport. At the two most recent Olympic Games (Rio in 2016 and PyeongChang in 2018), women represented less than 20% of coaches—just 10% in 2018 and 20% in 2016. Women coaches in the Paralympic Games do not fare any better. In fact, the Canadian 2018 Paralympic Games team had only one woman coach.

Given this current storyline, a progression of numbers shows women are under-represented as club, provincial, or national level sports coaches (based on training certification) at 34%, narrowing to 25% of post-secondary coaches, and further narrowing to less than 20% at the Olympic level. This means that even if girls stay in sport, the likelihood that they train with women coaches decreases as they move up in level of

competition. Women coaches are also impacted personally and professionally by stereotypes, discrimination and gendered organizational cultures that favour advancement opportunities for their men counterparts.²² In addition, the sport system suffers because it misses out on the benefits of diversity in perspective, lived experience and approaches that girls and women bring to sport.

The long-standing and consistent trend of women being under-represented in sport leadership positions in Canada prevails.

As another representation of leadership positions in Canadian sport, women are less likely to be among the athletic leaders of post-secondary schools in U Sports and CCAA—72% of athletic directors are men. This means that men, overwhelmingly, make the decisions around university-level sport. This is particularly noteworthy given the size and influence of post-secondary sport across all levels of the sport system.



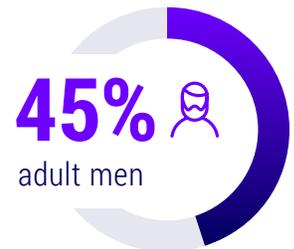
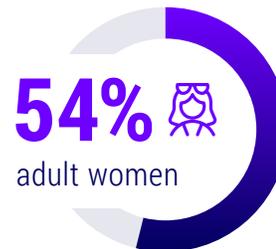
All told, women are less involved in sport at all levels and position of influence. These trends continue to feed the cycle of inequity that must be broken down. We can do this by acting with intention to create equity and inclusion—from leadership positions to participation rates. These factors inform and advance each other.



INFLUENCE – A FOCUS ON TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The lack of representation of women's sports and the way in which women are portrayed has been a longstanding concern.

PERCENTAGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHO BELIEVE THERE SHOULD BE MORE WOMEN'S SPORT CONTENT AVAILABLE ON TV AND ONLINE



Appropriate media portrayals help to show strong role models to girls and women. The coverage of major international competitive events, such as the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, is somewhat optimistic. Yet in 2014, only 4% of traditional media coverage was devoted to women's sport—a trend that showed a decline in representation of women over recent decades rather than an incline.²³ Moreover, media portrayals of elite women athletes with disabilities, who are pregnant or have children, or of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds lag further behind White able-bodied, non-mother, women. So, the challenge of equal representation is further taxed with lack of considerations on factors of intersectionality.

More recent accounts of the frequency and way in which women athletes are portrayed on social media is also discouraging. In a recent study of Instagram images posted by major sports networks in the United States, women were significantly less likely to be featured.²⁵ Also, women are more likely portrayed in sexualized ways that undermine their athleticism and target their emotions or appearance.^{24,26} These overall trends in the way women are viewed in sport media have not changed. And the trends don't stop with the athletes. Women sportscasters are also scrutinized for their looks. Women in sport media positions—editors, broadcasters, journalists—are highly under-represented compared to men in similar positions.²⁷ The bottom line suggests that media could be used for tremendous change for women in sport, but instead currently reinforces inequity and hinders progress for women and sport.



INCREASED QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF MEDIA VISIBILITY FOR WOMEN'S SPORTS WOULD:

- Demonstrate that women's sport and athletes are valuable
- Increase sponsorship interest
- Generate fans and revenue
- Increase exposure to girls and women role models
- Portray success of women in sport
- Describe a supportive, inclusive, and safe environment for girls to get and stay involved in sport.



SUMMARY

This report highlights little change in the participation rates and retention of girls and women in sport. Even with the long list of benefits that are linked to sport participation, many important barriers remain. These barriers ultimately lead to many girls and women missing out on the benefits both personally and professionally.

THIS CURRENT REPORT DID NOT TARGET MANY POTENTIAL FACTORS OR INFLUENCES. THESE INCLUDE:

- the nature and type of sport
- the location of sport participation
- the social circumstances for sport
- the way the intersections of identity and other contextual factors influence participation and quality of experiences in sport

It is essential that we target these components in both research and practice. We acknowledge that they are potential next directives.

FOR NOW, THE ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE CENTRE ON THE MAIN REPORT FINDINGS.

- low participation
- many barriers juxtaposed with many benefits
- inequities in experiences based on intersecting identities
- poor representation of women in leadership
- media influence that perpetuates inequity

If we are to achieve the vision that all women and girls be equitably represented, recognized, and served across all aspects of Canadian sport, the time for action is now. This report data highlights many insights that we can use to inform and create that change.





ACTIONS

TO CHANGE THE STATUS QUO FOR GENDER EQUITY IN SPORT, WE MUST

- act with intention and reinforce and evaluate these actions
- share effective actions for widespread learning and adoption
- collectively foster the empowerment of all girls and women in and through sport

Opportunity is everywhere. Many entry points are available for creating change. In that respect, no one is excluded from being able to make a difference. Every stakeholder in sport has a responsibility to act.

The following strategies are meant for collective attention by parents and guardians, teachers, coaches, trainers, officials, administrators, managers, and organizations. This list targets actions that are particularly related to the insights shared in this report. It is by no means exhaustive.

Many more actions, best practices, case studies, tools and other resources can be found on the Canadian Women & Sport website and those of our allies and partners.



It is important to note that our focus is on creating a more equitable and inclusive sport system—a welcoming environment that values and supports girls and women to participate and lead. The onus is on the system to change, not the women.



RETENTION OF GIRLS AS PARTICIPANTS

	Girls/Women	Parents/Guardians	Coaches	Officials	Sport Organizations	Corporations	Government	Media
Provide developmentally appropriate, safe and inclusive, and well-run sports that foster quality experiences.		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Encourage and support girls to participate in a variety of sports, offering them choice and autonomy in what to play, to support development of fundamental movement skills and resiliency in participation over time.		✓	✓		✓		✓	
Involve girls and women in the design, delivery, and evaluation of sport programs and opportunities, to connect to their motivations and improve the effectiveness of the approaches.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide access to positive and diverse role models representing a variety of roles and experiences in sport to help girls envision the possibilities. Be that role model.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Make ongoing skill development central to all programs, prioritizing fundamental movement skills and then sport-specific skills to develop and maintain girls' sense of competence and confidence.		✓	✓		✓			
Seek or provide training on girl-centred design and approaches, with recognition for diverse identities and lived experiences, to ensure experiences are designed intentionally to meet their needs and interests.		✓	✓		✓			
Create an environment that supports healthy social connections among participants and leaders to foster belonging. Set clear expectations for how group members will treat one another and hold one another accountable.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Provide specific positive reinforcement, with constructive feedback offered privately to support girls' skill development and confidence building. Avoid comparisons with other participants.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Develop zero-tolerance policies on weight and body commentary to create body-positive spaces for all participants. Focus commentary on what the participants can do, not what they look like.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Prevent physical injuries by gaining education and implementing policies and practices specific to injury prevention for girls.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Establish peer mentoring opportunities for girls from traditionally disadvantaged groups to foster belonging.			✓		✓	✓	✓	



EXPANDING LEADERSHIP BY WOMEN

	Girls/Women	Parents/Guardians	Coaches	Officials	Sport Organizations	Corporations	Government	Media
Commit to achieving and maintaining a gender-balanced board to ensure women's perspectives are included in decision making.		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Establish targets and appropriate plans for recruiting and advancing women as coaches, officials and senior leaders. Monitor progress annually.		✓	✓		✓		✓	
Use equitable practices in the hiring process (such as forming a diverse hiring committee) to recruit and fairly assess diverse candidates for open positions.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide equitable pay as a matter of policy to demonstrate value for women's talents and contributions.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create succession plans and individual development plans that prioritize and support the advancement of women to senior roles.		✓	✓		✓			
Adopt policies that support staff to balance work with family life, with particular consideration for barriers typically experienced by women. Check existing policies, practices and the culture for gender bias and consult women to identify more inclusive approaches.		✓	✓		✓			
Provide equitable training and development opportunities for coaches and officials, such as women-centred training sessions and apprentice programs, along with support to develop competition experience.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Create and support mentoring programs for girls and women to advance in all leadership roles.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			



	Girls/Women	Parents/Guardians	Coaches	Officials	Sport Organizations	Corporations	Government	Media
IMPROVING REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND SPORT								
Advocate for more coverage of girls and women as athletes, coaches, officials, administrators, leaders, and managers on mainstream media.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access and support training on inclusive language and narratives to improve the quality of coverage of women's sport.					✓	✓	✓	✓
Hire and promote more women in all roles within sports journalism, broadcasting, and commentating.					✓	✓	✓	✓
Leverage social media as a platform for girls and women to address the lack of media coverage and to present narratives about women and sport that are inclusive and empowering.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Girls/Women	Parents/Guardians	Coaches	Officials	Sport Organizations	Corporations	Government	Media
CREATING CONDITIONS FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION								
Adopt gender equity as a key principle used actively in setting policy and procedures and when allocating resources.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assess policies, practices and norms using a gender lens, and address inequities that emerge through this review.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Conduct and disseminate research on experiences of women and girls with intersecting identities, including sharing promising practices and programs.					✓	✓	✓	✓
Invest financially in targeted initiatives for gender equity and inclusion to address historical imbalances.					✓	✓	✓	✓
Monitor and evaluate rates of participation, leadership and representation of women and girls in sport, using standardized and consistent monitoring surveys.					✓	✓	✓	✓
Implement safe sport policies and practices, proactively addressing harassment, abuse and discrimination.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Become informed and educated on unconscious biases and stereotypical beliefs about gender and intersecting identity factors. Complete unconscious bias and gender-based analysis plus training.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identify a champion of gender equity initiatives with necessary authority, budget autonomy and measurable deliverables.			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Evaluate policies and programs designed to improve inclusion to determine whether they are working. Share what you learned with others.			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



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ABOUT CANADIAN WOMEN & SPORT

Canadian Women & Sport is dedicated to creating an equitable and inclusive Canadian sport and physical activity system that empowers girls and women—as active participants and leaders—within and through sport. With a focus on systemic change, we partner with sport organizations, governments, and leaders to challenge the status quo and build better sport through gender equity. For more information, visit www.womenandsport.ca.



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