

# Rally Report 2022

## A Call For Better, Safer Sport for Girls



# Land Acknowledgement

From coast to coast to coast, we acknowledge the ancestral, unceded, and unsundered territory of all the Inuit, Métis, and First Nations people that call this land home. We also acknowledge the deep-rooted grief, trauma, and loss caused by Canada's colonial systems and policies. As we take part in sport and physical activity across Turtle Island, we need to recognize the caretakers of the land where we live, work and play. Above all, we must recognize and respect Indigenous peoples' connection and kinship to the land.

**At Canadian Women & Sport, we commit to making changes in and through our work in the sport system, starting with the five calls to action related to sport in the report published by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada:**

- We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal Peoples, sports halls of fame and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.
- We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.
- We call upon the federal government to amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sport participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive to Aboriginal Peoples.
- We call upon the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs and initiatives are inclusive of Aboriginal Peoples, including, but not limited to, establishing:
  - i. In collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal Peoples.
  - ii. An elite athlete development program for Aboriginal athletes.
  - iii. Programs for coaches, trainers and sports officials that are culturally relevant for Aboriginal Peoples.
  - iv. Anti-racism awareness and training programs.
- We call upon the officials and host countries of international sporting events such as the Olympics, Pan Am and Commonwealth Games to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of planning and participating in such events.

**WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO VISIT [NATIVE-LAND.CA](https://native-land.ca) TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TERRITORY ON WHICH YOU LIVE, WORK AND PLAY.**

# Committed to Building a Better, Safer Sport System



Sport has the power to unite and inspire us. It brings out the best in us as individuals, and as a community. For girls, women and gender-diverse people, sport can be transformative, but only when they have equitable opportunities to engage in quality, safe sport.

Over the last few years, and through the COVID-19 pandemic, we've seen how the current sport system in Canada is failing girls and women in many ways. It was as though a spotlight was shining on the gaps and inequities that exist in sport. In 2020, 1 in 4 girls weren't sure if they'd return to sport post-pandemic—it wasn't meeting their needs. At the same time, our news was, and continues to be, full of headlines highlighting the individual and systemic impacts of decades of abuse, toxic cultures, sexual violence, and harassment in all levels of sport. As much as we believe in the power of sport, the uncomfortable reality is that the current system is flawed.

The research explored in this report was developed through an intersectional gender lens. We wanted to know how girls and women are experiencing sport today based on what matters to them—so we asked. The message couldn't be clearer: our current sport system is failing to provide girls and women with access to safe, quality sport as participants and as leaders.

When you ask the right questions, you get better answers and in turn, can create solutions that lead to real change. Our task is to hear what the girls are telling us. We must act now to disrupt the status quo and create a better, safer sport system for all. Join us in this important work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allison Sandmeyer-Graves'.

**Allison Sandmeyer-Graves**  
CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tanya Mruck'.

**Tanya Mruck**  
Board Chair

**This research is meant to be shared and used to effect change. Whenever sharing this information, please credit: The Rally Report 2022, Canadian Women & Sport.**

# Introduction from Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities



Since 2005, Jumpstart has been on a mission to help kids in financial need across Canada reach their full potential through sport and play. By removing the barriers to participation, Jumpstart has enabled more than 3 million kids of all ages and abilities to participate in a new sport or keep playing the one they love.

Like Canadian Women & Sport, we know that sport offers many valuable benefits beyond physical fitness, such as the opportunity to develop leadership skills, foster resilience, and form social bonds. We also know that girls face unique barriers to participation which affect their potential to stay enrolled and engaged in sport, and to continue reaping these benefits for life.

That's why in 2022, Jumpstart launched Play to Lead, a sport leadership program intentionally designed to enable young women to build the skills to become leaders in the game and in their communities. Through our longstanding partnership with Canadian Women & Sport, we strive to improve gender equity within community sport organizations across Canada.

With The Rally Report, the premier study on the status of women and girls in sport participation in Canada, we are laying the foundation off which to build a more equitable, safe game for all athletes. The report includes direct feedback from girls in sport and actionable insights for sport leaders at all levels.

Achieving gender equity in sport is a team effort. We are proud to support the work of Canadian Women & Sport to advance our shared mission and to give every child equal opportunity to succeed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M12", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Marco Di Buono**

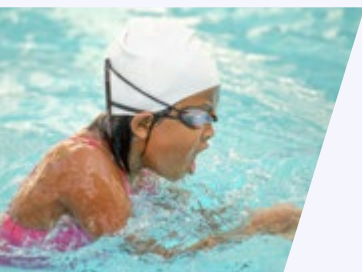
President, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities

# Introduction

As the Canadian sport system recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, and we continue to hear about the impacts of decades of harm and abuse spanning all levels of sport, Canadians are demanding more of sport organizations. They are challenging leaders to deliver safer, better and more inclusive sport. Girls and women are at the forefront of this call for change.

This report details how 4,500 Canadian girls and women, and over 350 women sport leaders, experience sport in 2022.<sup>1</sup> **The data presents a clear story: girls want sport done differently so they can safely and fully participate and lead in sport.**

## KEY INSIGHTS



### 1 Girls' participation rates in sport have held steady through the pandemic, but overall remain low.

- By adolescence, half of girls are not participating in sports.
- 14% of girls who returned to sport post-pandemic are not participating to the same extent as before COVID-19.



### 2 Girls and their parents want sport back, but they want it back better than it was before the pandemic. After losing access to sport during COVID-19, girls and their parents are more acutely aware of the benefits of sport.

- Over 90% of girls believe sport benefits their physical and mental health.
- Almost half (46%) of parents report low quality programming as a barrier to their 6 to 12-year-old girls' ongoing participation in sport. This jumps to 55% for girls age 13 to 18.



### 3 Sport leaders are not equipped to address the needs of girls.

- Less than half of coaches receive training on how to create quality opportunities for girls in sport.
- 37% of administrators do not consider gender when allocating resources.
- 1 in 3 girls report that coaches and organizations are not addressing important safety issues within girls' sport.

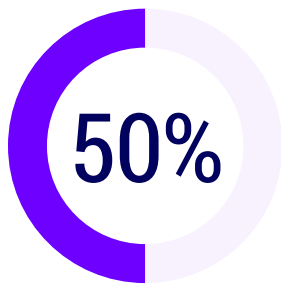
<sup>1</sup> This report presents survey responses of parents of girls age 6 to 12 and personal reflections from girls and women age 13 to 78, with a focus on the target groups of girls age 6 to 18. Data from sport leaders were obtained from a separate survey sent to sport organizations. Reference to girls and women throughout the report should be understood as self-identified gender, not as assigned biological sex.

# 1 Girls' Participation Rates Hold Steady, But Are Still Too Low Overall

Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, participation rates for girls and women held steady from 2020 to 2022. The fact that we didn't lose large masses of girls and women over the pandemic is a huge victory. **We celebrate the leaders across Canada who worked hard to maintain sport participation for girls post-pandemic.**



**However, now is not the time to settle for the status quo – it's simply not good enough. Girls want to play.**



of girls are not participating in sport by the time they reach adolescence.

**13%**

of 13 to 18-year-old girls and

**10%**

of 6 to 12-year-old girls who participated in sport before the pandemic did not return.



**20%**

of parents report their 6 to 12-year-old girls are less interested in sport than before the pandemic.



**1 IN 3**

of 13 to 18-year-old girls currently engaged in sport are unsure if they will continue to participate.

As much as we love sport, the truth is the current system isn't inclusive enough. It's time to disrupt the old norms and create the conditions for more girls, women and gender-diverse people to participate fully and safely in sport.

# An Intersectional Look at Participation Rates

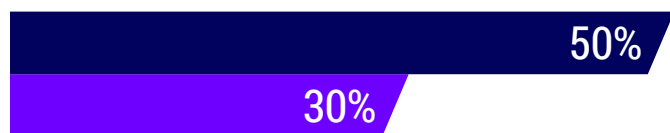
Girls, women and gender-diverse people experience and participate in sport differently based on their intersecting identities. Some of these identities include race and ethnicity, economic status, ability, and 2SLGBTQIA+ identity. This report tries to capture some of these overlapping identities. While it's not a complete picture, it clearly reveals how important it is to look beyond gender to ensure that all girls are accounted for and included.

## OVERVIEW OF GIRLS PARTICIPATING IN SPORT

Percent of White girls participating in sport at least weekly



Percent of First Nation, Inuit, and Metis girls participating in sport at least weekly



Percent of Black girls participating in sport at least weekly



Percent of girls from low-income homes participating in sport at least weekly



Percent of girls identifying as 2SLGBTQ+ participating in sport at least weekly



AMONG 6 TO 12-YEAR-OLD GIRLS

AMONG 13 TO 18-YEAR-OLD GIRLS

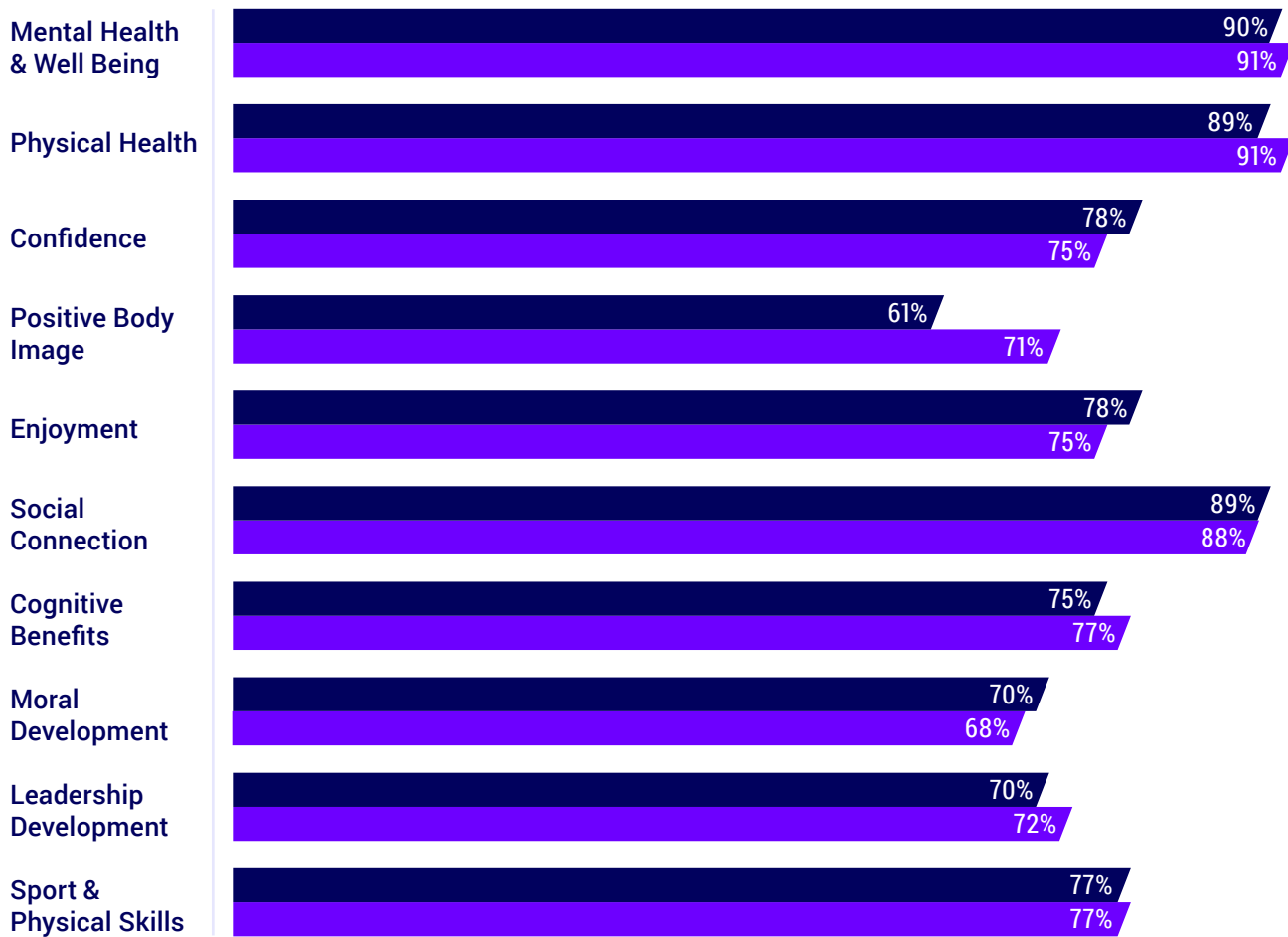
Girls and women of intersecting identities had a lower rate of response to this survey. More research is needed to better understand how their identities combine with gender to influence participation in sport.

## 2 The Benefits of Participating in Sport are More Acute Than Ever – So Are The Barriers

Despite the pandemic's interruption of sport participation and ongoing issues within the sport system, girls and their parents overwhelmingly see the value of participating in sport.



### PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS REPORTING EACH BENEFIT OF SPORT PARTICIPATION



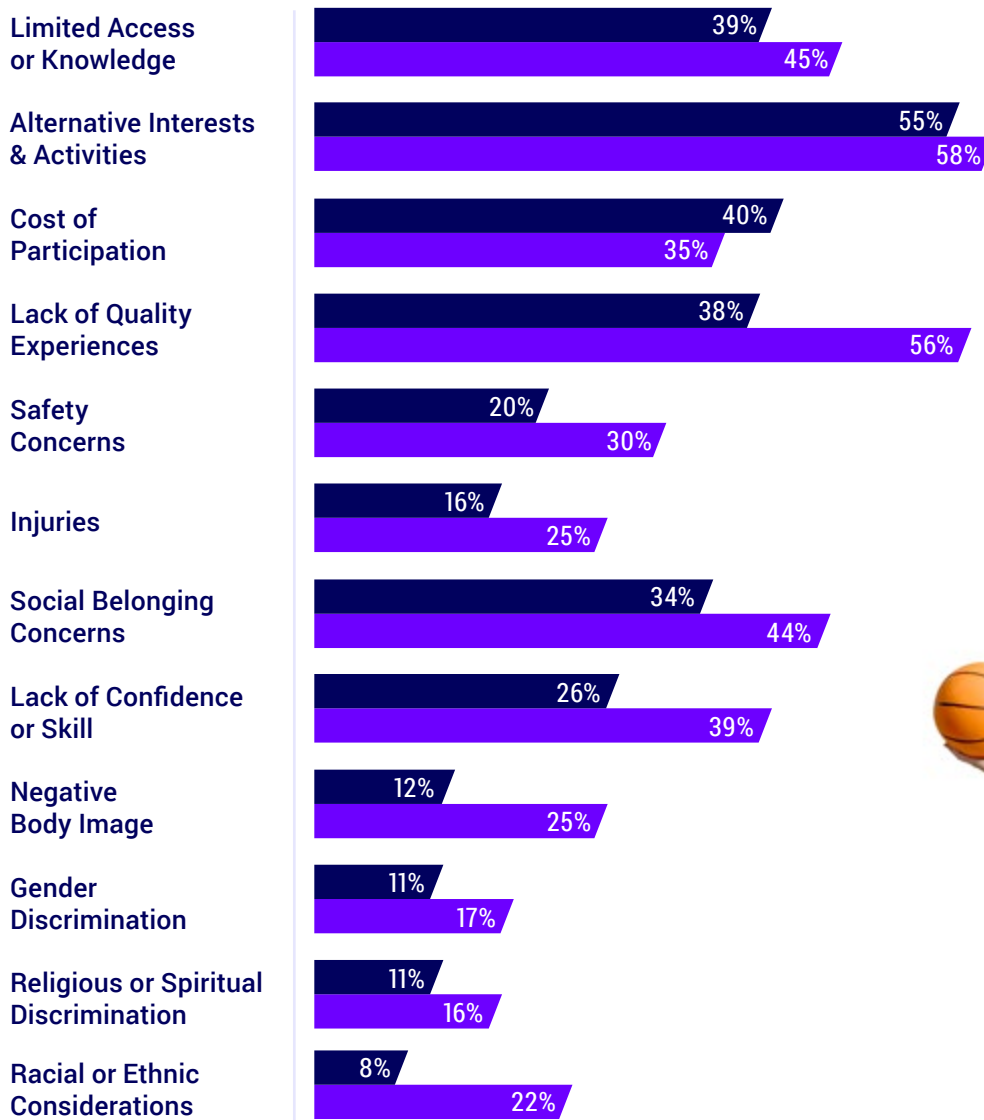
AMONG 6 TO 12-YEAR-OLD GIRLS

AMONG 13 TO 18-YEAR-OLD GIRLS

Unfortunately, the reality is girls face major barriers to accessing safe, quality sport. Understanding and addressing these barriers is one way we can start building a better sport system for girls.



## PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS REPORTING EACH BARRIER TO SPORT PARTICIPATION



**“I’m not confident in my skills having missed 2 years [of sport due to the pandemic].”**

- GIRL, 17



AMONG 6 TO 12-YEAR-OLD GIRLS



AMONG 13 TO 18-YEAR-OLD GIRLS



**+10%**

The number of girls and parents who are reporting low quality sport as a barrier has increased more than 10% since 2020.

The number of girls and parents reporting safety concerns as a barrier has increased about 10% since 2020.



**+35%**

Over 50% of girls and their parents report interest and engagement in other activities as a barrier to their sport participation in 2022. This is up from 35% in 2020.

## GIRLS ARE MOST LIKELY TO LEAVE SPORT DURING ADOLESCENCE.

The top barriers for 13 to 18-year-old girls include:



Body Image Concerns



Safety



Lack of Confidence & Skill



Quality of Sport



Injury

Girls also experience more gender, racial, and religious/spiritual discrimination as they become adolescents and identify these experiences as barriers to sport.



**“A lot of [sport] was cancelled due to the pandemic and I fell out of the habit. When it came back it was run by different people who were less good at it.”**

- GIRL, 13

## AN INTERSECTIONAL LOOK AT BARRIERS

Efforts to address barriers to girls' participation in sport will be insufficient if they do not consider the unique needs of girls with intersecting identities. While this data presents some insights on intersectional barriers, it is not a clear or complete picture of the barriers girls with intersecting identities face.



**+10%**

Racialized girls report encountering almost every barrier about 10% more than their White peers.

Among 13 to 18-year-old girls with disabilities:



**25%**

report experiencing stigma due to their disability.



**16%**

of those who use equipment for their disability (such as a wheelchair or prosthetic) report dissatisfaction with its appearance or function.

**+10-15%**

13 to 18-year-old girls from lower income homes report barriers related to access, cost, racism, and bullying at 10-15% higher than girls from higher-income families.

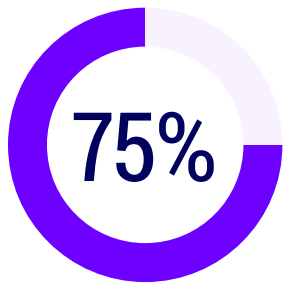


**+10%**

For girls identifying as 2SLGBTQ+, body dissatisfaction as a barrier to sport was reported 10% higher than for girls not identifying as 2SLGBTQ+. Other barriers were reported at similar or lower levels. For example, girls identifying as 2SLGBTQ+ were less likely to report alternative interests and activities, and lack of quality experiences, as barriers to sport participation.

### 3 Coaches, Parents and Sport Leaders Have Immense Impact & Must Do More

Coaches, parents and sport leaders play a critical role in defining girls' experience in sport. They also have a responsibility to do more to ensure better, safer sport environments.



of girls think sport leaders need more training and skills to effectively serve girls.



50%

of sport administrators and 40% of board members have not received training on key safety issues in sport including harassment and abuse. This number jumps to 60% for other volunteers.



50%

of sport administrators and 40% of board members have not received equity, diversity and inclusion training with respect to disability or gender, and 60% have yet to receive training on anti-racism and cultural inclusion. Less than 1 in 3 other volunteers have received training on these topics.

**Less than half of coaches** report receiving training on topics related to keeping girls in sport, including gender equity, body image, and mental health. It's no surprise that less than 10% of 13 to 18-year-old girls feel comfortable talking to their coach about these topics.



**37% of sport leaders report that they do not consider gender when they determine how to allocate resources.** This includes funds, facility access, and coaching and volunteering time.

This disproportionately benefits male athletes as gender bias plays out. Applying a gender equity lens in decision making helps sport leaders disrupt the status quo and make informed and strategic decisions that will create more equitable conditions.

# Safety in Girls' Sport

SAFETY SHOULD ALWAYS BE THE FOREMOST CONCERN.

**1 IN 3 GIRLS** report that coaches and organizations are not addressing important safety issues within girls' sport including:



**Bullying**



**Physical Safety**

(e.g., poor field conditions, broken equipment)



**Social Safety**

(e.g., coaches not trained on abuse, peer violence)



**Racism**

Gender inequity creates unsafe spaces for everyone, but particularly for girls, women, and gender-diverse people. It creates conditions that puts girls at risk of gender-based violence. Work towards advancing gender equity is work towards safer sport.



## WHAT ABOUT PARENTS?

Girls often see their parents as role models. They also consistently report feeling the most comfortable talking to their parents about sensitive topics in the context of sport including body image, bullying, mental health, menstruation, and racism. Yet less than 30% of parents felt they had the appropriate skills to talk to their child about many of these topics. Equipping parents with knowledge and resources to support their adolescent girls is critical.

# Women Sport Leaders

All leaders in sport have the power to make decisions that improve conditions for girls, women and gender-diverse people. Often this change starts inside organizations by empowering women leaders. Among women sport leaders that we surveyed:

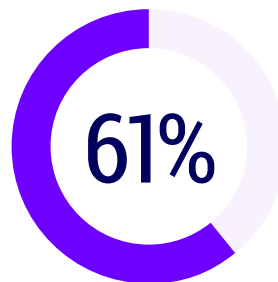


**59%**

want to progress further as a sport leader but

**52%**

feel there are few opportunities.



do not feel their organization invests in their development as a sport leader.

**ONLY 20%**

agree their organization provides appropriate cultural diversity training that is important for their development.

## LEADERSHIP, VISIBILITY & INVESTMENT

All areas of sport benefit from the presence of girls, women and gender-diverse people. Girls are calling for more:

75% say that more efforts are needed to get women into leadership roles.



80% agree that girls would stay in sport more if they had role models.



77% want to see more women's sport content on TV and online.



63% want to see sport content that features gender-diverse people who identify beyond the gender binary.



75% of girls think that sport organizations, brands and companies, and governments should do more to support sport for girls and women in Canada.



# Four Calls For Better, Safer Sport

If we're going to be successful in building a better, safer sport system, we must consult women and girls. It is our responsibility to ask better questions, listen intently and value what they are telling us. For girls, women and gender-diverse people to access the same opportunities as boys and men in sport, we have to prioritize them. We have to put girls at the centre of our plans and stop making them an afterthought.

THIS IS EQUITY. THIS IS HOW WE CREATE BETTER, SAFER SPORT. THESE ARE OUR FOUR CALLS TO ACTION.

## 1 We call on sport organizations to train coaches and activity leaders in gender equity so they understand and can meet the needs of girls and women.

Everything from how front-line sport leaders plan practices, build a sense of belonging, and provide feedback and support can make the difference in whether sport is a place where girls feel safe and welcome, and ultimately whether or not they stay.

## 2 We call on sport organizations to train administrators and staff on why and how to apply a gender equity lens to everyday decision-making.

Sport leaders build coaching and officiating pathways, recruit volunteers, and plan event schedules. We cannot expect them to support coaches and officials in better serving girls and women without first being equipped with gender equity skills themselves.

## 3 We call on board members to become gender equity champions.

As the people who shape strategy, board members can help put gender equity on the agenda. They have the power to direct attention and resources toward gender equity.

## 4 We call on funders and all levels of government to provide long-term, consistent investments in gender equity with clear progress targets.

These decision-makers can hold organizations accountable to their gender equity actions. By providing long-term and consistent investments for gender equity in sport, funders, policy makers and governments can help organizations overcome staffing and capacity issues that undermine their progress.

**To girls and women, keep raising your voices and demanding better. We hear you. We are listening. And we are by your side working towards better, safer sport for all.**

Canadian Women & Sport can support sport organizations and leaders to take action. Visit [www.womenandsport.ca](http://www.womenandsport.ca) to learn more.

# Methodology

Over 4,500 Canadians age 13 to 78 years old, 70% of whom are girls and women, responded to a survey conducted by Leger Marketing on behalf of Canadian Women & Sport. This report explores current trends in sport participation with a specific focus on the target groups of girls aged 6 to 18. This report presents responses of parents of girls aged 6 to 12 and personal reflections from girls aged 13 to 18.

Consistent with previous reports, sport participation is defined as any participation in an organized team or individual sport at least once a week over the last 12 months.<sup>2,3</sup> Any reference to girls and women in this report should be read as self-identified gender, not assigned biological sex. Due to lower response rates to this survey from individuals with a gender identity other than man or woman, perspectives from gender-diverse people are not represented in this report.

Data from 235 sport leaders, 79% of whom are women, were obtained from a separate survey sent to community sport organizations, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and National Sport Organizations. These data are used to understand more about organizations responsible for delivering sport. They are also combined with data from 183 women who identified themselves as sport leaders in the general survey to explore the trends and experiences of women in sport leadership roles.

**This research is meant to be shared and used to effect change. Whenever sharing this information, please credit: The Rally Report 2022, Canadian Women & Sport.**

2 Women in sport: Fuelling a lifetime of participation a report on the status of female sport participation in Canada. Available at: [https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Fuelling-a-Lifetime-of-Participation-Report\\_Canadian-Women-Sport.pdf](https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Fuelling-a-Lifetime-of-Participation-Report_Canadian-Women-Sport.pdf)

3 The rally report: Encouraging action to improve sport for women and girls. Available at: [https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Canadian-Women-Sport\\_The-Rally-Report.pdf](https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Canadian-Women-Sport_The-Rally-Report.pdf)

# Acknowledgments



The Rally Report would not be possible without the collaboration of our partners. We are especially grateful for support from Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities.

Thank you to the Canadian girls, women, and gender-diverse people who shared their experiences of participating and leading in sport. We are grateful for the trust you place in us.

Thank you to Dr. Catherine Sabiston (University of Toronto) and Dr. Madison Vani (University of Toronto), who provided expert stewardship in the research and analysis. Their expertise and commitment were instrumental to the reports' realization.

We also recognize our Impact Research Committee, co-chaired by Dr. Sabiston and Dr. Cheri Bradish (Toronto Metropolitan University) for their guidance. This expert advisory group also includes Dr. Alison Doherty (Western University), Dr. Janelle Joseph (University of Toronto), Dr. Norm O'Reilly (University of Maine), and Dr. Tara McHugh (University of Alberta).

We appreciate the vision and support of the Canadian Women & Sport Board of Directors who champion this important work as well as for the tremendous dedication and hard work of the Canadian Women & Sport staff who are helping to bring about real and meaningful change. Special thank you to Danielle Cyr and Dr. Christianne Varty for their guidance and contributions to this report.



**To those who are doing the work to create better, safer sport by sharing their lived experiences or being supportive allies - we see you. We thank you. Doing this work, getting uncomfortable and creating brave spaces is hard. We stand beside you and appreciate all that you do.**