



# 2024 Ontario Coaching Report



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This report looks at coach values, behaviours, and hazing to better understand Ontario amateur sport culture in practice, in 2024.

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# Highlights

**Overall, the majority of Ontario coaches embody positive sport values. However, that majority is modest (about 2 in 3) and leaves a significant amount (1 in 3) not coaching in ways that reflects these values.**

**While 9 in 10 coaches say positive sport values are important to their coaching, for each behaviour 20-30% identified a gap between what they value in coaching and how they coach in practice. The impact of this gap ranges from moderate (not considering fun during practice) to serious (breaking league rules).**

**Alarmingly, for 1 in 10 coaches these values (such as fair play, safe sport, and athlete health) are not important to their coaching. It is clear that Ontario sport leaders, whether they are organizations or individuals, must do more to communicate the values of positive sport and how to implement these principles in practice.**

- 600 million hours are spent each year by Ontarians in sport coaching, sport instruction, or sport mentorship.
- Coaches value creating a positive sport culture in principle, but struggle to define what positive sport culture is.
- 4 in 10 coaches could not identify specifically what values make a positive sport culture.
- Across every type of coaching in Ontario, 7 in 10 coaches are consistently building fun into their coaching.
- Skill Development & Learning is a strength of Ontario coaches, with 3 in 4 coaches consistently behaving in ways that demonstrate this value.
- While most coaches behave in ways that reflect the values of Fair Play and Ethics, a notable minority (2 in 10) do not.
- A majority of coaches actively discuss mental wellness, and follow up when their athletes' experience challenges.
- Hazing remains a significant issue in Ontario sports, with 4 in 10 coaches aware of hazing among athletes and 6 in 10 having experienced it as athletes themselves.
- Most coaches (86%) agree that sport hazing is a serious issue, but do not agree on what behaviours they consider hazing.
- Half of coaches (49%) believe it is appropriate to specialize in one sport at 12 years old or younger.





# About the CAO

- The Coaches Association of Ontario (CAO) is an independent, non-profit organization that supports coaches from community to high performance across all sports in Ontario. We work to provide coach development, funding opportunities, and events to provide support, recognition and representation for all coaches in Ontario.
- We serve the needs of coaches to create an exceptional, safe and positive experience for all athletes and participants at every stage of their sport participation.
- CAO delivers the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) in Ontario.

## Values

### Ethics

Integrity and safety guide our decisions and actions.

### Quality

Provide world leading, high quality support services and programs.

### Leadership

Enabling and empowering people to develop into leaders.

### Innovation

Creative and evidence-informed ways to evolve and find solutions.

We believe sport should be fun, fair, inclusive, and safe. We believe sport is at it's best when it builds community, supports growth, and empowers us to excel.

# Our Partnership

**The Ontario Coaching Report is part of the ongoing Safe Sport 101 partnership between CAO and Hydro One.**

Safe Sport 101 is dedicated to giving coaches the tools they need to make sport safe, fun and inclusive for all. The virtual hub offers free resources including the Safe Sport 101 Playbook eLearning series, downloadable resources and granting programs.

Hydro One is committed to giving back to the communities where they live, work and play. Their community investment program builds safe communities across Ontario by focusing on safe play and safety training. That is why we have continued to partner together to recognize and support the important role coaches play in building a culture of safety for their participants across Ontario.



**Thank you to our partner!**

# About the Report

**The Ontario Coaching Report is the most comprehensive study on coaching in Ontario, covering all sports and competition levels.**

## **2024: Exploring Coaching and the Impact on Sport Culture**

- In the 2023 report, it was found that 1 in 3 coaches were aware of hazing rituals, with 33% supporting these practices. Based on these findings, and in consultation with Dr. Jay Johnson, published research, and sport-industry experts CAO developed an action plan to educate coaches, athletes, and parents, as well as learn more about the type of sport culture coaches are creating.

## **CAO Action Plan: A Timeline**



- With the 2024 Ontario Coaching Report, we aim to provide thorough insight into coaching behaviours across all sports and contexts and analyze the steps that coaches, parents, and sport administrators can take to create a more positive and inclusive sport experience for everyone.

# A Note for Readers

Dear Coach,

This report aims to analyze how we, as actors in the Ontario sport environment, align our behaviours with the values of sport in Canada. Exploring value alignment can be a difficult and uncomfortable process, especially if we realize our values and behaviours do not always align. When we see this misalignment between our values and our behaviour, we may avoid the information or try to justify our behaviours in an attempt to reduce these uncomfortable feelings.<sup>1</sup> However, these actions don't resolve the inconsistency between our values and our behaviour. This report serves as an opportunity for us all to reflect on how our practices align with our values and beliefs, and how we can more intentionally embody and incorporate the positive sport values.

We know you want the best for your athletes. We hope this report can act as tool to help to create the best environment for them.



# Positive Sport Values

- This study looks at coach behaviour through the lens of **8 values** we believe are essential to creating positive sport in Canada. Throughout the report, we refer to these as **Positive Sport Values**.
- In the following sections, we compare these values with how Ontario coaches are coaching everyday in our communities.

We wanted to answer the following questions:

**How aligned are Ontario coaches with the positive sport values?**

**Are coaches' behaviours reflective of their values?**

## CAO Selection of Values

- CAO examined the publicly available values of Canada's prominent sports organizations, including Sport for Life, True Sport, the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC), and the Canadian Sport Policy (2012). We discovered that most of these values were aligned.
- We grouped these values into eight categories to create a unified set that we could use to survey coaches.

### Example of shared values\*

**Value: Fun**

Canadian Sport Policy (2012) – 'Fun'

True Sport - 'Keep It Fun'

Sport for Life - 'Fun'

Canadian Olympic Committee – 'Fun'

\*See rationale and a list of all organizational values on page 41

## Long-Term Athlete Development

- Since the creation of the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model, sport organizations have been working to create a supportive and dynamic sport environment in Canada, balancing competitive success with inclusivity, safety, and enjoyment.

The Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model was developed by Sport for Life and acts as a foundation for the NCCP. The LTAD aims to address gaps in traditional athlete development systems. Its focus is promoting a more holistic approach to sports participation and performance, emphasizing the importance of age-appropriate training, long-term development of athletes, and lifelong participation in physical activity.



## CAO's 8 Positive Sport Values

**Fun**

**Safe Sport  
& Respect**

**Performance  
& Results**

**Athlete Health  
(Physical & Mental)**

**Skill Development  
& Learning**

**Participation  
& Inclusion**

**Fair Play  
& Ethics**

**Connection &  
Community Building**

Together, these values seek to create a sport system that supports both competitive achievement and the well-being of all participants.

### Why Values Matter

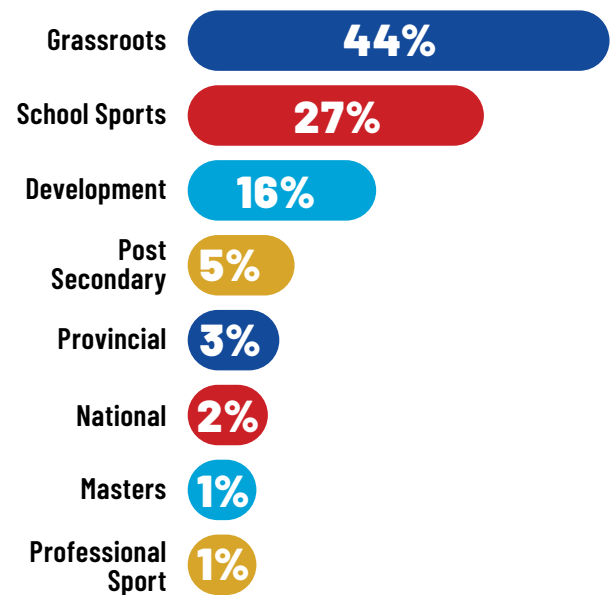
- For prospective or aspiring coaches, the experiences they've had as athletes and with their own coaches greatly influence their coaching styles, philosophies, values, and attitude.<sup>2</sup> As coaches, we shape not only our athletes' sports experiences and personal growth but also the future coaches of sport in Ontario.
- "A values-based approach to sport supports the development of 'communities of character' where athletes, coaches, officials, parents and other stakeholders work together in an environment built on shared values including mutual respect, fairness, play, acceptance of diversity and inclusion."<sup>3</sup>

# Ontario Coach Demographic Highlights

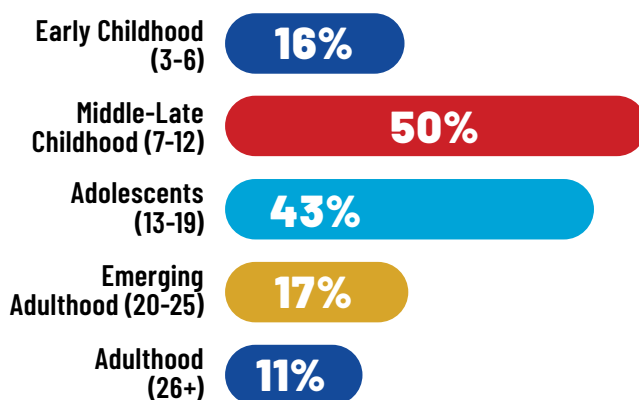
**Coaching is practiced by Ontarians of every age, race, ability, sexual orientation, income, and level of education.**

- The majority of coaching takes place in the grassroots context, for athletes aged 7-12, and by a coach with less than 6 years experience.
- 70% percent of coaches are volunteers, with just 3% of coaches receiving a salary.
- About half of coaches have some type of NCCP Training.

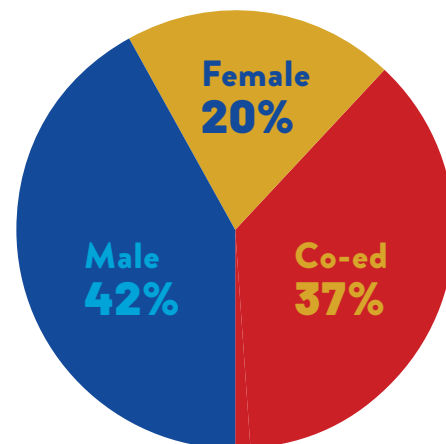
## Coaching Contexts



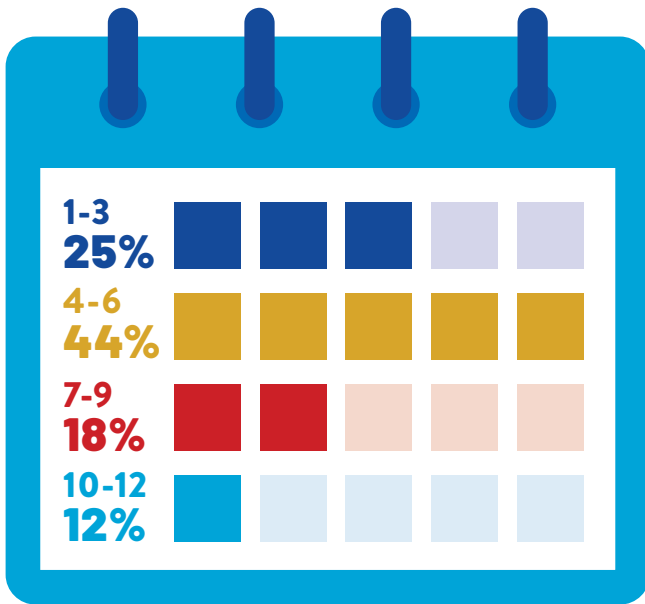
## Age Coached



## Genders Coached



## Season Length (in months)



## How coaches spend their time each week



In-person Coaching



Preparation  
& Planning



Administration  
& Logistics



Communication



Other  
Coaching  
Duties

- **14.8 hours** are spent each week on coaching and coach related duties during the season (on average).
- **24 weeks** (5.5 months) is the average season length for an Ontario coach.
- Across all sports, and all contexts, coaches spend an average of **350 hours** per year on coaching.

- **40%** of coaches are coaching one of the top 4 most popular sports:



**Soccer**



**Basketball**



**Baseball**



**Ice Hockey**

- **600 million hours** are spent each year by Ontarians in sport coaching, sport instruction, or sport mentorship.\*
- **98.1 hours** each year are spent on coach development by coaches (on average).

\*Based on the survey results compared with demographic data of Ontario, about 1.75 million adult Ontarians are currently engaged in sport coaching, sport instruction, or sport mentorship.

Further demographic information can be found on page 35.

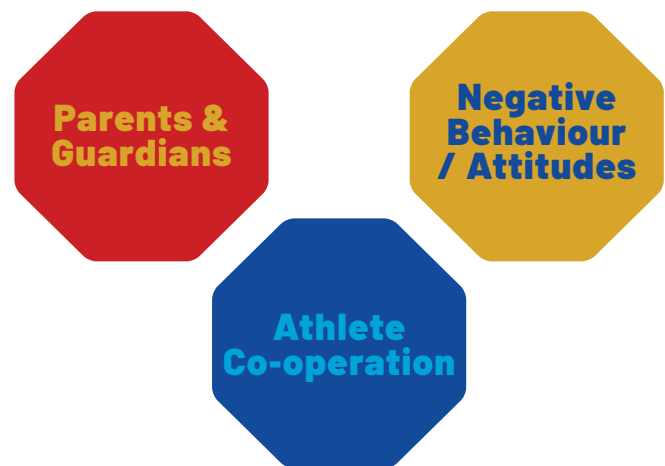
# Coach Values & Sector Alignment

**Coaches value creating a positive sport culture in principle, but struggled to define what a positive sport culture is. This could be why coaches' behaviours fall short of their values.**

**4 in 10 coaches didn't know what values make up a positive sport culture.**

- When defining positive sport culture, coaches showed no consensus. Teamwork was the most common value mentioned, cited by only 29% of coaches.
- However, when presented with the 8 positive sport values, 9 in 10 coaches agreed they were important to their coaching.
- 8 in 10 coaches (83%) believe sport culture is important to their coaching.
- 9 in 10 coaches believe they successfully build the sport culture they want to with their athletes or team.

**Top 3 challenges coaches identify in creating a positive sport culture**

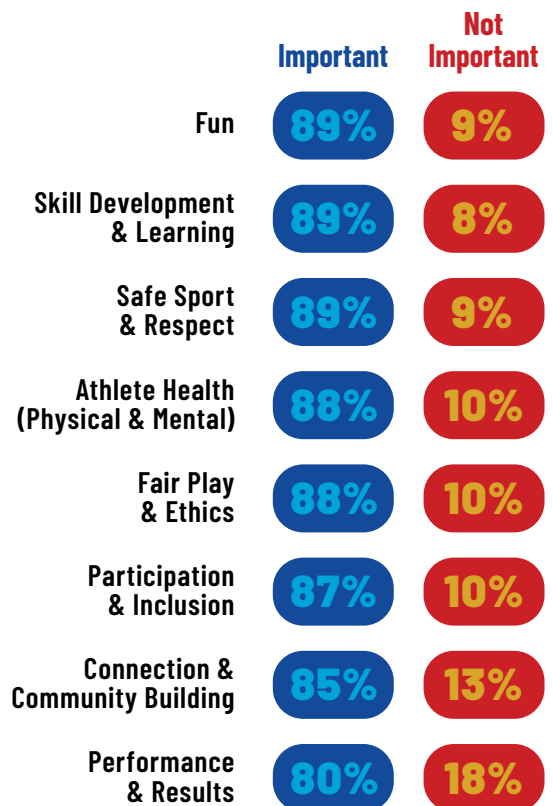




## Positive sport culture values identified by coaches



## Importance of positive sport values to coaches\*



\*Coaches opinions on the positive sport values were largely uniform across all sport contexts, athlete age, and gender.

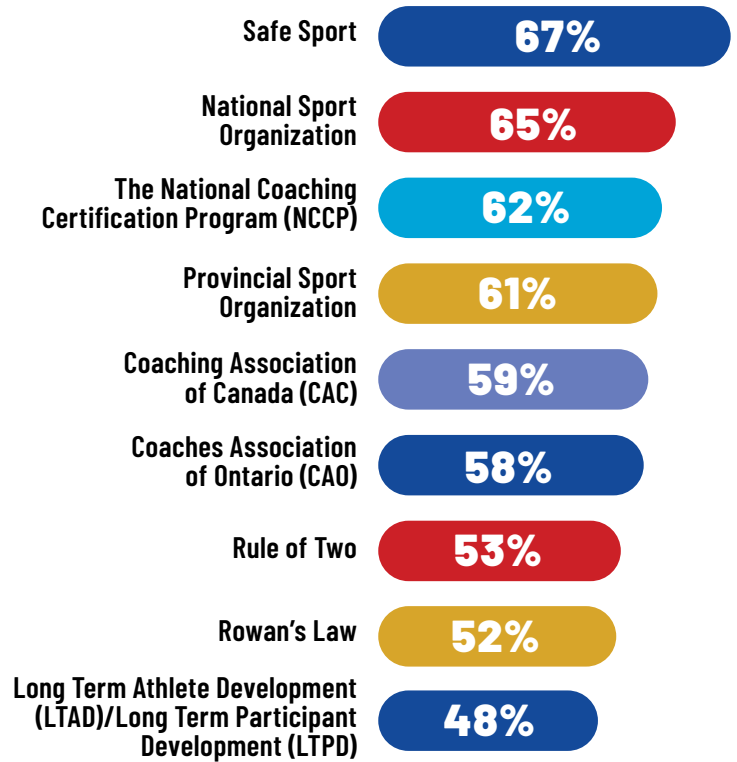


## Top reasons coaches believe kids play sports



- Fun is the top reason why coaches believe kids play sport.

## Coach familiarity with the sport system



# Coaches are not aware of the Positive Sport Values

**Without prompting coaches did not list Fun as a value of positive sport culture.**

- When asked to list the values of positive sport culture, less than 1% of coaches listed Fun. (pg. 12)
- 39% of coaches didn't know what values make up a positive sport culture.

**Fun is a core value of positive sport in Canada, listed as part of the Canadian Sport Policy (2012).<sup>17</sup>**

(See page 41)

**However, coaches do understand that Fun is an important part of sport.**

- Fun is the top reason why coaches believe kids play sport
- When prompted, 89% of coaches said Fun is important to their coaching.

## Research

- “4/5 [Canadians] believe that promoting positive values in youth should be a priority for sport in Canada, but fewer than 3/5 believe community sport currently reinforces them.”<sup>4</sup>
- While many can agree that values-based sport is an important consideration to the future of positive sport, there appears to be a need for “common language and shared definitions” that all those involved in sport can look to for guidance.<sup>5</sup>

# Coach Behaviours vs Values

**Overall the majority of coaching behaviour in Ontario is in alignment with the positive sport values.**

- That majority however, is modest (about 2 in 3) and leaves a significant amount of coaches (1 in 3) not coaching in alignment with the positive sport values.
- 9 in 10 coaches say the positive sport values are important to their coaching. This is very positive.
- 7 in 10 coaches consistently act in alignment with these values, which indicates that most coaches are upholding the positive sport values.
- However, for each behaviour, 20-30% of coaches reported a discrepancy between their coaching values and their actual coaching practices. Given that perfection is unrealistic and coaching is primarily a volunteer role, this gap between values and behaviours is understandable. Nonetheless, it highlights areas where we, as coaches and sports leaders, can strive to improve.
- For each value, about 1 in 10 said it was not important to their coaching. The importance of values such as Fair Play, Athlete Health, and Skill Development are critical in quality sport, and this 1 in 10 statistic represents a serious concern, as it translates to thousands of coaches in Ontario.





# Fun



## Findings Summary:

Across every type of coaching in Ontario 7 in 10 coaches are consistently and explicitly building fun into their coaching.

This behaviour was demonstrated across all sports, contexts, ages, genders, and years of experience.

\*this number is an average of the positive coach behaviours most related to the value of Fun (listed below in this section).

- Creating a fun sporting experience is essential for encouraging ongoing participation, motivation and engagement, as well as fostering a lifelong connection to physical activity.
- 48% of coaches believe having fun playing is one of the top 3 reasons kids play sport.
- Older coaches (55+) are more likely to believe Fun is the reason kids play sport (61%), compared to younger coaches (18-34, 41%).

## Coach Behaviours

	Always /Often	Sometimes /Never
Explicitly consider fun when planning a practice	73%	25%
High-five, fist bump, handshake with athletes, not related to a competition	69%	29%
Encourage your athletes to participate in team cheers	66%	32%
Ask for your athlete's input on what they would like to learn or focus on at practice	64%	33%

- Only 4% of coaches never consider fun when planning a practice.

### What do we mean by Fun?

Fun in sports is not about goofing off or being silly. Research shows that for children, fun in sports includes excitement from games, connections through team friendships, and the joy of learning and improving, all of which are fostered through positive coaching and team rituals.<sup>6</sup> These elements work together, enhancing engagement and enriching the sporting environment.<sup>6</sup>

- “Contrary to what many may think, fun does not come at the expense of individual athlete and team achievement efforts. In other words, it appears that greater athletic performance is more likely to be achieved if kids are engaged in the most fun sport experiences possible.”<sup>6</sup>

# Performance & Results

**80%** of coaches said Performance & Results was important to their coaching

**68%** of coaches consistently incorporate Performance & Results into their coaching

**18%** of coaches said Performance & Results was not important to their coaching

**12% gap**

between coach values and coach behaviours

## Findings Summary:

Of the 8 positive sport values, Performance & Results was the least important to coaches (although 80% still said it was important). About half of parents and athletes consistently express the importance of winning directly to coaches. 3 in 4 coaches say they emphasize skill development and progress over winning, which is a behaviour that supports long term growth and results.





- Achieving high performance in Canadian sports drives athletes to excel at the national and international level, ensuring they receive the necessary support and resources to pursue excellence.

## Coach Behaviours

	Always /Often	Sometimes /Never
Emphasize skill development and progress over winning	77%	21%
Monitor progress toward individual athlete goals	63%	28%
Set individual goals for each athlete	63%	33%

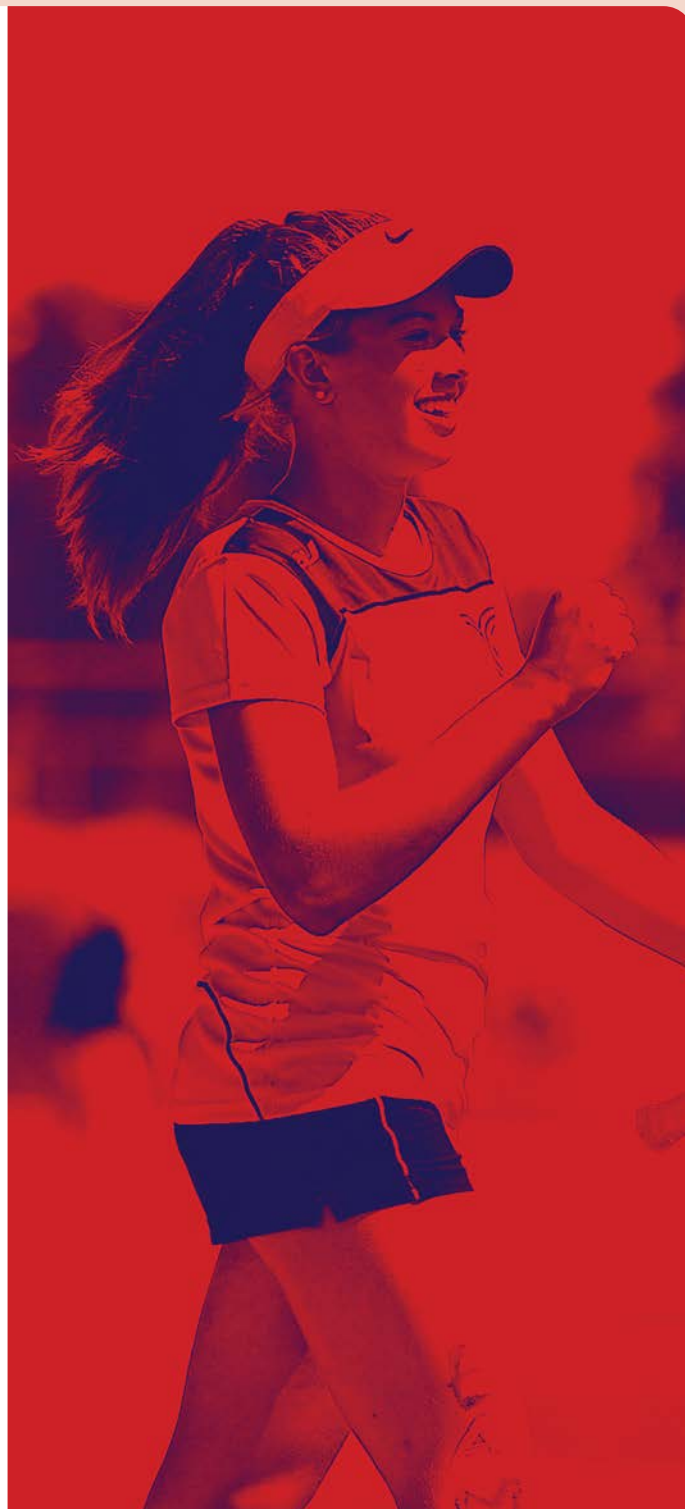
- Coaches with NCCP training are 10% more likely to set individual goals for each athlete and monitor progress towards them.

### Winning

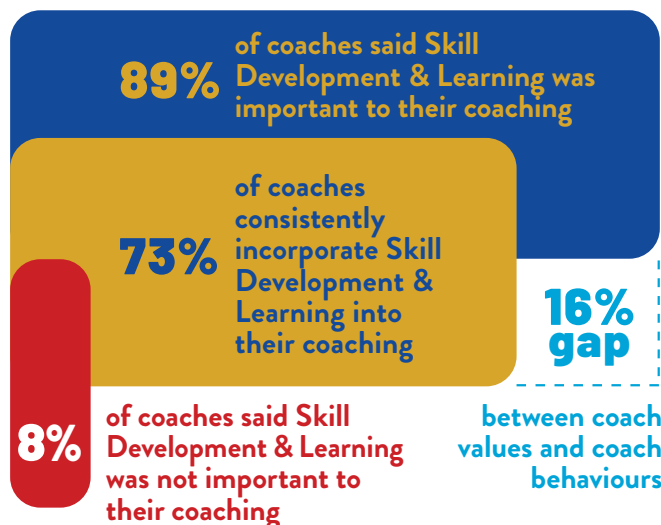
Winning does have a place in sport, as there is a path to victory in every game played. However, this value must be balanced against the other 7, along with other factors like age, competitive context, and more.

The importance of winning and results is often communicated by about half of those involved in sport (coaches, athletes, parents)

- ◆ **Coaches** – 45% of coaches always or often emphasize the importance of winning or results.
- ◆ **Athletes** – 50% of coaches say half or more of their athletes tell them how much they want to win or achieve a specific result.
- ◆ **Parents** – 42% of coaches say half or more of their parents express the importance of winning or results to them directly.



# Skill Development & Learning



## Findings Summary:

The value of Skill Development & Learning is a strength for Ontario coaches, with 3 in 4 consistently demonstrating it. An area for improvement is arriving to practice with a pre-written plan, with only 64% doing so often, and just 33% always bringing one.

- Continuous skill development and learning are crucial for athletes at every stage of participation. Structured training, education, and development opportunities ensure athletes build a strong foundation and advance their skills effectively.
- Coaches with NCCP training (any amount) are 10% more likely to arrive at practice with a pre-written plan and structure (69%) compared to those without NCCP training (59%).

## Coach Behaviours

	Always /Often	Sometimes /Never
Share why a skill/drill is important, not just how to do it	77%	21%
Provide visual examples to show how a skill should be done	76%	22%
Give specific & constructive feedback for correcting technical errors	74%	23%
Use verbal examples that describe how a skill should be done	73%	24%
Arrive at practice with a pre-written plan and structure	64%	33%

# Fair Play & Ethics



## Findings Summary:

Most coaches behave in ways that reflect the value of Fair Play & Ethics. However, a notable minority of coaches (2 in 10) undermine Fair Play & Ethics through behaviours such as bending/breaking league rules, or openly criticizing opponents. Coaches of older athletes and coaches in more competitive contexts are unfortunately less likely to behave in ways that demonstrate Fair Play & Ethics. Coaches also receive pressure from both parents and athletes to bend or break league rules.

- Maintaining integrity in sports relies on upholding fair play and ethical conduct. Valuing rules, respecting opponents and promoting honesty among athletes helps develop individual character and enriches the sport experience for everyone.
- Paid coaches are 3x more likely to bend/break league rules (38% vs 12%) or openly criticize/put down an opponent/opposing team (38% vs 14%) compared to volunteers.
- Coaches in schools or competitive contexts are 2x more likely to bend/break league rules (27% vs 12%) and 3x more likely to openly criticize/put down an opponent/opposing team (29% vs 10%) compared to grassroots coaches.

## Coach Behaviours

	Always /Often	Sometimes /Never
Acknowledging or celebrating an athlete's accomplishments in front of others	73%	24%
Ensure athletes shake hands or acknowledge opponents at the end of the competition	72%	17%
Outwardly respect the official's decision, regardless of whether you agree	63%	26%
Openly criticize/put down an opponent/opposing team	21%	70%
Bend or break league rules	19%	70%

# Safe Sport & Respect

**89%** of coaches said Safe Sport & Respect was important to their coaching

**67%** of coaches consistently incorporate Safe Sport & Respect into their coaching

**9%** of coaches said Safe Sport & Respect was not important to their coaching

**22% gap**

between coach values and coach behaviours

## Findings Summary:

The majority of coaches (2 in 3) have a good understanding of Safe Sport practices (including the Rule of Two). A similar amount of coaches (2 in 3) behave in ways that reflect these policies. However, a significant minority (1 in 3) continue to use coaching behaviours which are now considered maltreatment, such as exercise as punishment.





- Ensuring a safe and respectful environment is vital for protecting athletes from abuse, harassment, and injury. Canadian sport leaders are committed to implementing policies and practices that promote safety, create a positive atmosphere, and safeguard the well-being of all participants.

### Safe Sport

- ◆ 67% of coaches are familiar with Safe Sport.
- ◆ “Safe Sport” refers broadly to athletes’ right to participate in sport free of maltreatment (such as bullying, neglect, and physical, psychosocial and sexual abuse) or any form of violation against human rights.”<sup>7</sup>

## Coach Behaviours

	Always /Often	Sometimes /Never
Admit when you are wrong or when you make a mistake	75%	23%
Give an athlete a time out or remove them from practice when not following direction	37%	59%
Hold private, closed-door 1 on 1 meetings with the athlete	35%	63% Never 33%
Use exercise as punishment for underperforming (i.e., extra laps, sprints)	29% Always 12%	70% Never 38%

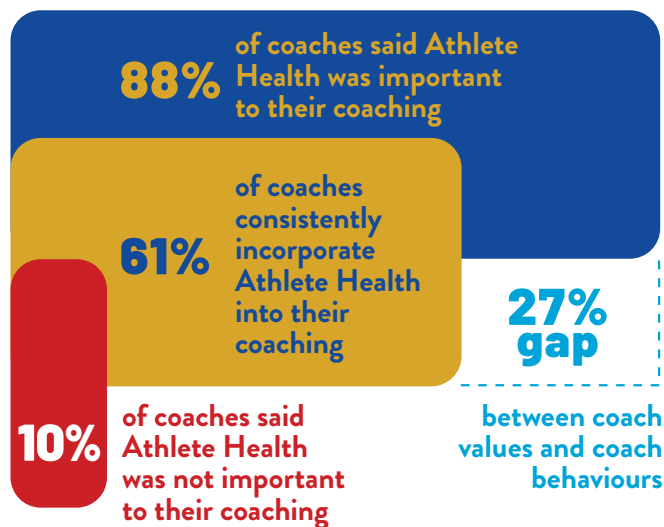


### 1-on-1 Meetings and the Rule of Two

- ◆ “When following the Rule of Two, two responsible adults (a coach, parent, or screened volunteer) are present with a participant. There may be exceptions in emergency situations.”<sup>8</sup>
- ◆ Survey data suggests there is a relationship between familiarity with the Rule of Two and whether a coach still holds 1-on-1 closed door meetings with athletes.
- ◆ 53% of coaches are familiar with the Rule of Two and (63%) sometimes or never hold private meetings.
- ◆ 37% of coaches are not familiar with the Rule of Two and a similar number (35%) say they always or often hold private meetings.



# Athlete Health (Physical & Mental)



## Findings Summary:

A majority of coaches actively discuss mental wellness, with coaches 18-34 years of age most likely to engage in these conversations and follow up when their athletes are experiencing challenges. While younger coaches are most consistent in providing mental health support, they are also more likely to express frustration and disappointment by yelling, especially male coaches as well as those coaching school sports and in the competitive context. Coaches 45+ years of age more frequently adhere to return-to-play protocols and do not allow athletes to return early after suffering and injury.





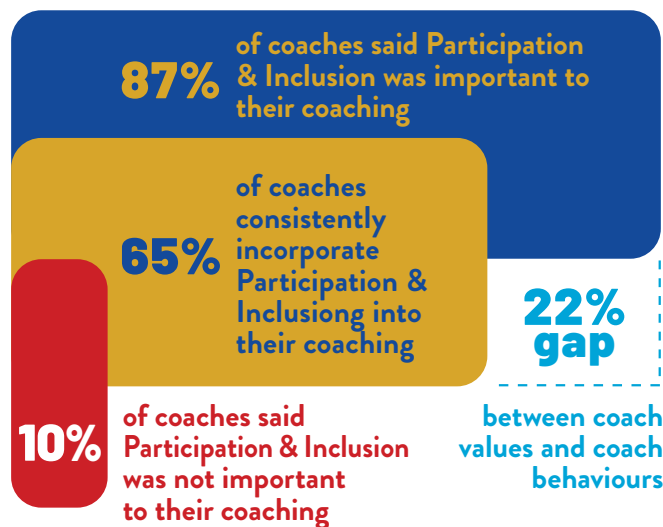
- Prioritizing both physical and mental health is crucial for the well-being of athletes. Support for athletes' health, including injury prevention and mental health resources ensures that they can perform at their best.

## Coach Behaviours

	Always /Often	Sometimes /Never
Check back in with an individual after learning they are experiencing a personal challenge outside of sport	64%	32%
Ask the athlete about their life and interests outside of sport	58%	39%
Discuss mental health and provide resources to help support positive mental health	53%	43%
After an injury, allow an athlete to return to play earlier than originally planned if they say they feel better	32%	63%
Yell when frustrated or disappointed	22%	69%

- 49% of coaches over 45 years of age report never letting an injured athlete return to play early (vs. 24% of coaches under 45 years of age).
- The youngest coaches (aged 18-24) are the most consistent in asking about athlete mental health and providing support, with 67% reporting this behaviour (vs. 44% for coaches over 25 years of age).
- 2 in 10 coaches yell when frustrated or disappointed (22%), openly criticize or put down the opposition (21%) and/or bend/break league rules (19%); these practices are more frequent among men, younger coaches aged 18-34, and those in paid roles (vs their counterparts).
- Coaches over 35 years old are less likely to express frustration or disappointment by yelling, with 49% reporting never engaging in this behaviour (vs. only 28% of coaches under 34).
- Male athletes are more likely to consistently experience a coach yelling. 28% of those who coach male athletes report always or often yelling (vs. 20% for coaches of female athletes and 16% for coaches of co-ed groups).

# Participation & Inclusion



## Findings Summary:

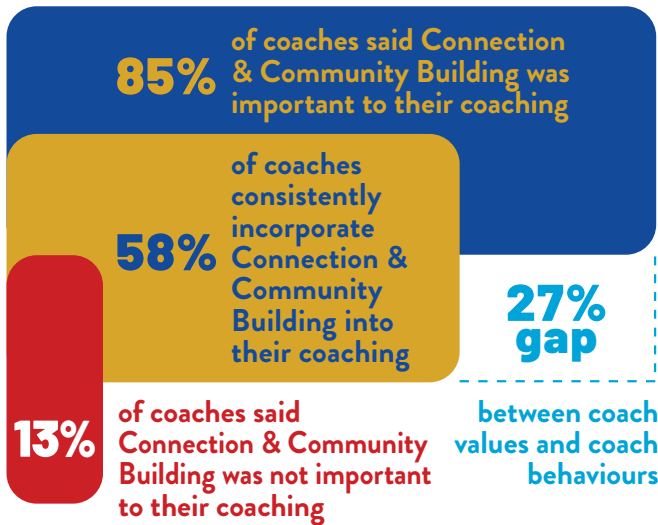
More than half of coaches consistently act in a way that promotes an inclusive sport environment for their participants. Inclusive behaviours frequently exhibited by coaches include: learning about the cultural backgrounds represented amongst participants and families, asking for preferred pronouns, and spending equal time coaching each participant.

- Promoting widespread participation and inclusion ensures that sport is accessible to everyone, regardless of background, ability, or experience. Sport in Canada strives to eliminate barriers and create opportunities for all individuals to engage in and benefit from sport.
- 6 in 10 coaches always or often try to learn about the cultures and backgrounds of their players, and consider them when planning team activities to ensure everyone can participate.
- 10% of coaches never try to learn about player cultural backgrounds, while 5% never consider it when planning team activities (More common in coaches 65+).
- Coaches younger than 35 are 1.5x more likely to spend more time coaching their “better” athletes (48% vs. 26% of coaches over 35).

## Coach Behaviours

	Always /Often	Sometimes /Never
Acknowledge each individual athlete when arriving and departing practice	75%	21%
Talk to your athletes at eye level, even if it means adjusting your height	65%	32%
When organizing a team event, consider players' family backgrounds and cultures so everyone can participate	63% Always 33%	32%
Learn about the different cultures and backgrounds that your athletes come from	63%	34%
Ask athletes for their preferred names and pronouns	59%	37%
Spend more time coaching the better athletes	37%	59%

# Connection & Community Building



## Findings Summary:

Overall, coaches do a very good job of communicating goals and expectations to their athletes. Many of them also actively build two-way communication with their athletes by consistently asking for feedback on their coaching.

When it comes to strengthening community ties with parents and guardians, coaches could look for more opportunities to actively engage parents, include them in activities and ask for their feedback.

- Sport has the power to connect individuals and build strong communities. Sport plays a key role for Ontarians in fostering social connections, creating a sense of belonging, and strengthening community ties.
- Coaches between 18-34 are more likely to ask for feedback from parents/guardians, with 6 in 10 always or often engaging in this behaviour
- Coaches 45-64 years of age are least likely to seek parent/guardian feedback, with 6 in 10 sometimes or never doing so.

### Parent Meetings

During the season, coaches hold an average of 3.6 group parent meetings.

- ◆ 21% of coaches do not hold a parent meeting.

## Coach Behaviours

	Always /Often	Sometimes /Never
Communicate openly with athletes about your coaching goals and expectations	72%	25%
Actively ask for feedback from your athletes about their experience being coached by you	58%	38%
Actively ask for feedback from parents/guardians about your coaching	54%	44%
Organize a team activity outside of your practice/games	46%	51%





# Hazing, Initiation, & Team Building

**4 in 10 coaches are aware of hazing behaviours taking place among their athletes in the past 2 years. 6 in 10 coaches experienced these behaviours themselves as an athlete.**

- 1 in 5 coaches are aware of **extreme** hazing behaviours taking place with their athletes in the past 2 years. 1 in 4 coaches experienced these behaviours as an athlete.
- Coaches aged 18-34 report **2-5x higher** levels of hazing behaviours amongst their teams compared to their older counterparts (35-54 & 55+).

**Most coaches (86%) agree that hazing is a serious issue in sports, but there is no consensus on what behaviours should be considered hazing.**

- Only 4 in 10 coaches communicate acceptable and unacceptable behaviours with their athletes at the start of the season (45%), intervene to stop hazing practices (43%), and/or discipline athletes who engage in hazing practices (40%) every time they have the opportunity.
- Coaches of co-ed sports are significantly less likely to have a positive view of extreme hazing behaviours (~10%) compared to coaches of gender-separated teams (~20%). Co-ed coaches also report these behaviours happening less frequently. (11% vs. 20%).



## Hazing Behaviours\*

	Coach views behaviour positively	Coach is aware of athletes engaging in this behaviour*	Coach experienced this behaviour as an athlete
Physical tests	42%	14%	27%
New members required to do labour for senior members	26%	9%	15%
Being yelled, screamed, or cursed at by others	15%	9%	21%
Demearing nicknames	19%	8%	7%
Wearing embarrassing clothing	19%	7%	9%
Forced singing or chanting in public	26%	6%	14%

## Extreme Hazing Behaviours\*

	Coach views behaviour positively	Coach is aware of athletes engaging in this behaviour*	Coach experienced this behaviour as an athlete
Pressure to consume alcohol or drugs	16%	5%	8%
Deprivation of sleep, food or water	18%	5%	7%
Pretend abduction/kidnapping	18%	4%	4%
Physical and/or sexual assault	16%	4%	5%
Consumption of vile concoctions	18%	3%	4%
Vandalism or property damage	15%	3%	5%

\*Hazing Behaviours as per Hazing Prevention 101 – A Coach’s Role.” Safe Sport 101, 2024.  
<https://safesport101.coachesontario.ca/create-positive-sport>

## Frequency of Team Building & Hazing Behaviours

	Coach views at least 1 behaviour positively	Coach is aware of athletes engaging in at least 1 behaviour*	Coach experienced at least 1 behaviour as an athlete
Team Building Behaviours	91%	63%	53%
Hazing Behaviours	62%	35%	53%
Extreme Hazing Behaviours	32%	18%	24%

\*Athletes in the last 2 years have engaged in it, as observed by the coach.

## Team Building Behaviours

	Coach views behaviour positively	Coach is aware of athletes engaging in this behaviour*	Coach experienced this behaviour as an athlete
Team Meal	82%	46%	35%
Movie Night	77%	31%	20%
Active Team Outing	78%	29%	24%
Attend a Sports Game	80%	26%	24%

\*Athletes in the last 2 years have engaged in it, as observed by the coach.

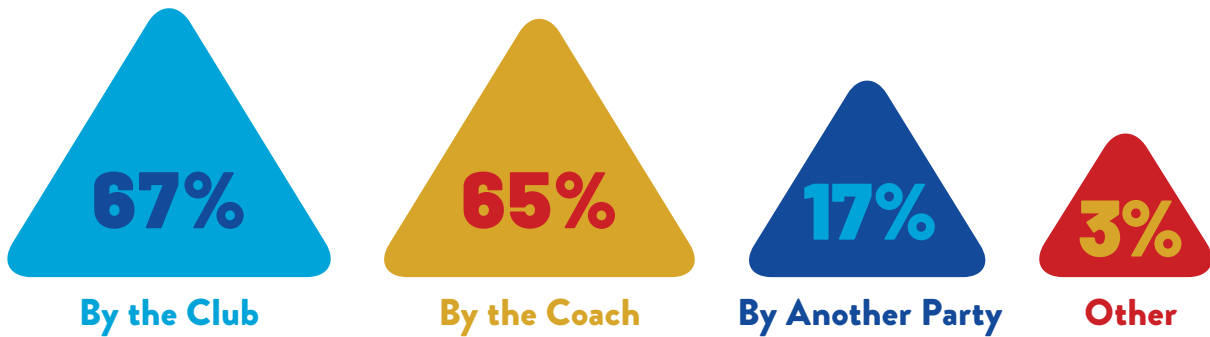
## How Often Coaches Address Hazing

	Rarely /Never	Sometimes	Every Time	Don't Know
Communicate acceptable and unacceptable behaviour with athletes at the start of a season	16%	25%	45%	14%
Intervene to stop a hazing practice taking place	17%	17%	43%	23%
Discipline athletes after the fact when they have engaged in hazing behaviours	18%	18%	40%	24%

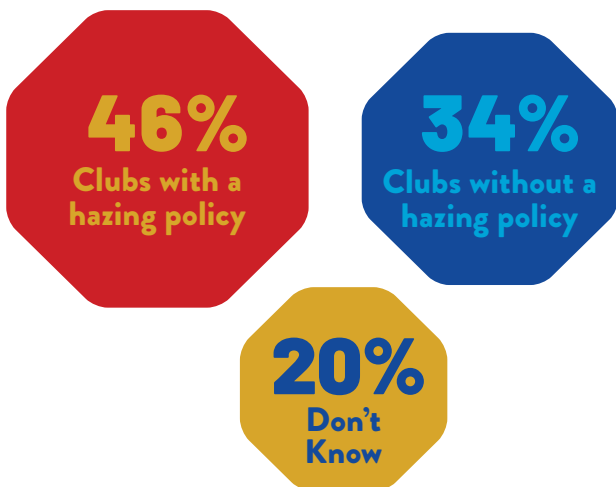




## Hazing Policy Enforcement



## Organizational Hazing Prevention



- Paid coaches are 2x as likely (29% vs 15%) to say they are aware of athletes taking part in extreme hazing behaviours (compared to volunteer coaches)
- Coaches of adult athletes are 2x as likely (30% vs 15%) to say they are aware of athletes taking part in extreme hazing behaviours (compared coaches of children/youth)
- Extreme hazing is reported less by grassroots coaches (9%) compared to school coaches (20%) or competitive coaches (29%).

# Sport Specialization & High-Performance Potential

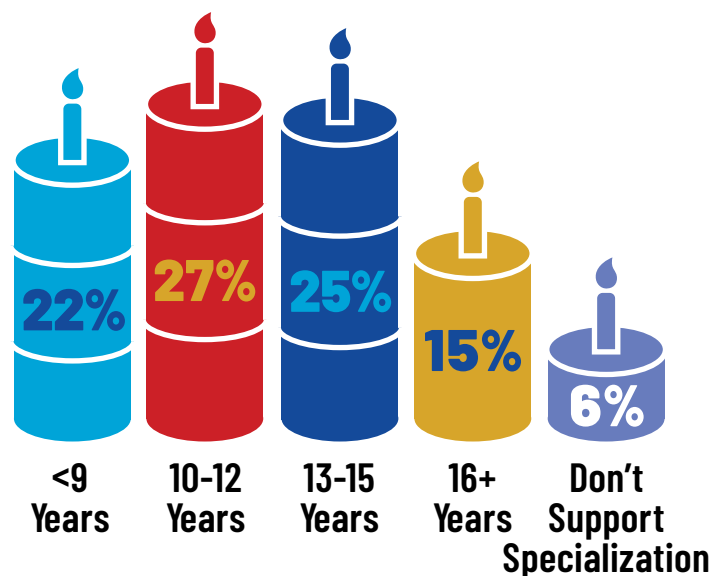
Half of coaches (49%) believe it is appropriate to specialize in one sport at 12 years old or younger.

Coaches say a significant number of parents, 4 in 10 (41%), believe their child has the potential to become a high performance, scholarship, or professional athlete.

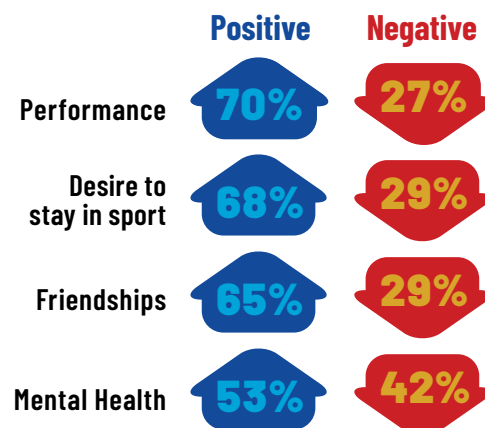
- 4 in 10 coaches (42%) believe that the main reasons that kids choose not to play sports is because they do not feel they are good enough, they are not interested in sports, or the sport is too expensive.

The Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model suggests that children should generally avoid early sport specialization. Instead, it advocates for a broad base of skill development through a variety of sports and physical activities during early childhood and into adolescence.

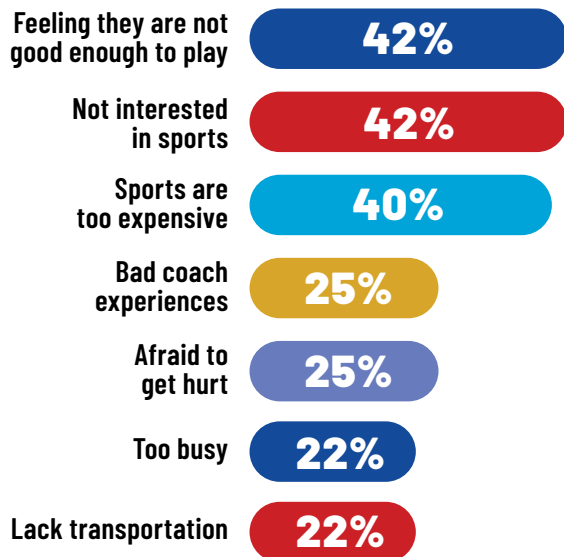
## Coaches' Preferred Age for Sport Specialization



## Coaches' opinions on how parents' emphasis on high performance impacts athletes



## Top reasons coaches believe kids do not play sports



- Only 48% of coaches are familiar with Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD)/Long Term Participant Development (LTPD).

### Why Kids Drop Out:

- ◆ “In Canada and globally, 5- to 19-year-olds say lack of enjoyment, feeling they are not good enough to play and an increase in family and intrapersonal stress were the most common reasons for dropping out of sport.”<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ Almost three-quarters (73%) of Canadians say children’s sport has become too focused on winning at the exclusion of fun and fair play.<sup>4</sup>

## Going Pro & Sport Specialization

- ◆ Sport specialization describes the exclusion of other sports to focus on intense, year-round training in a single sport.<sup>9</sup>
- ◆ 39% of coaches observed that at least half of their athletes’ parents believe that their child has the potential to become a high performance, scholarship, or professional athlete. 49% of all coaches believe it’s appropriate for players 12 years and younger to specialize in one sport.
- ◆ The chances for an athlete to continue to a pro league or national team are incredibly low. Less than 1/1000 teenage athletes make this transition.<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ Early specialization is not a prerequisite to becoming an elite-level athlete, especially in late-specialization sports.<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ While eventually some level of sport specialization is required for “elite-level skill development,” this kind of training intensity in young athletes heightens the risk of injury, stress, burnout, and sport dropout.<sup>9</sup>
- ◆ Early sport specialization limits a child’s fundamental movement skills, which has poor effects on their overall motor skill development and their ability to perform at an elite level.<sup>12</sup> Children who develop fundamental movement skills are more likely to stay active and participate in sport from childhood to adulthood.<sup>13</sup>



# Coach Perspectives On Parents & Athletes

**Coaches say the majority of parents are engaged with their child's sport experience, and are more likely to be supportive and helpful than critical.**

**However, they also say a significant minority of parents behave in critical or harmful ways.**

- Overall, about half of coaches (45%) indicate they have conflicts with parents or guardians.
- With parents and guardians, playing time (16%) and intervening with conflicting ideas or trying to coach over them (15%) are the main areas of conflict for coaches.
- 22% of coaches say half or more of their athletes' parents or guardians criticize or put down their own child.
- 67% of coaches say half or more of their athletes' parents or guardians attend games or competitions.

**1 in 3 coaches say half or more of their athletes' parents or guardians often criticize officials during a game, trash talk opposing athletes or teams, or ask to bend league rules or guidelines.**

This data on parents and athletes is from the perspective of the coach. We asked coaches what they observed in their athletes and the parents of those athletes.

We did not survey parents or athletes directly (although we hope to do so in future studies).



These two charts show the amount of coaches who observed a majority of parents or athletes doing the following:

## Observed Parent Behaviours

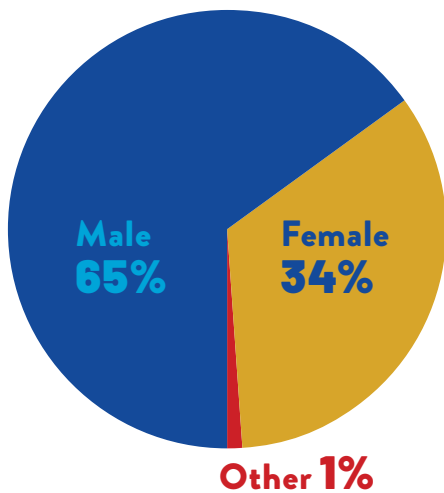


## Observed Athlete Behaviours

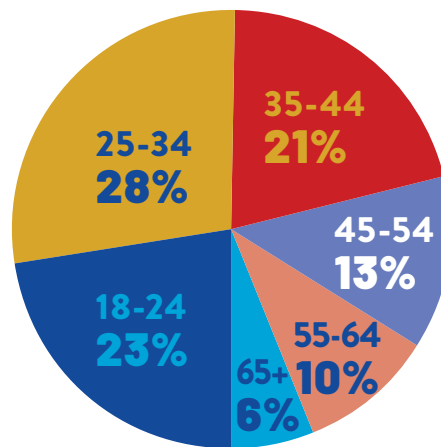


# Ontario Coach Demographics - Continued

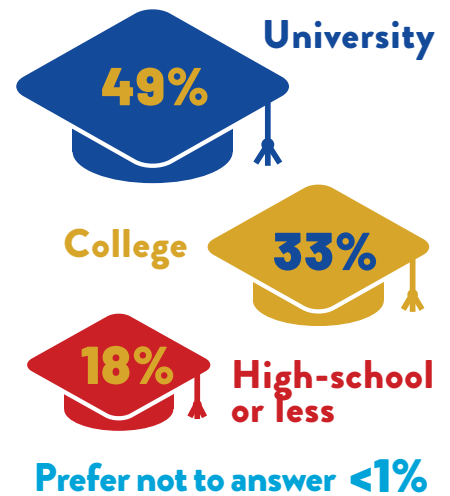
## Gender



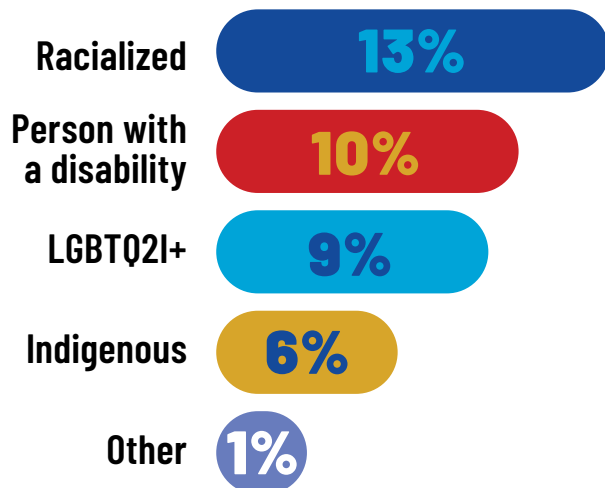
## Age



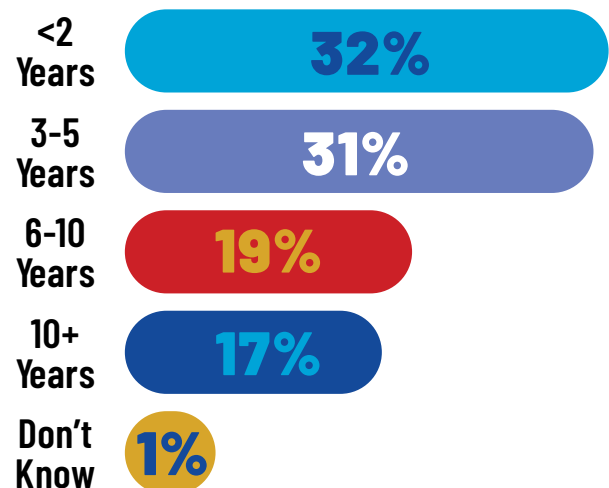
## Highest Level of Education



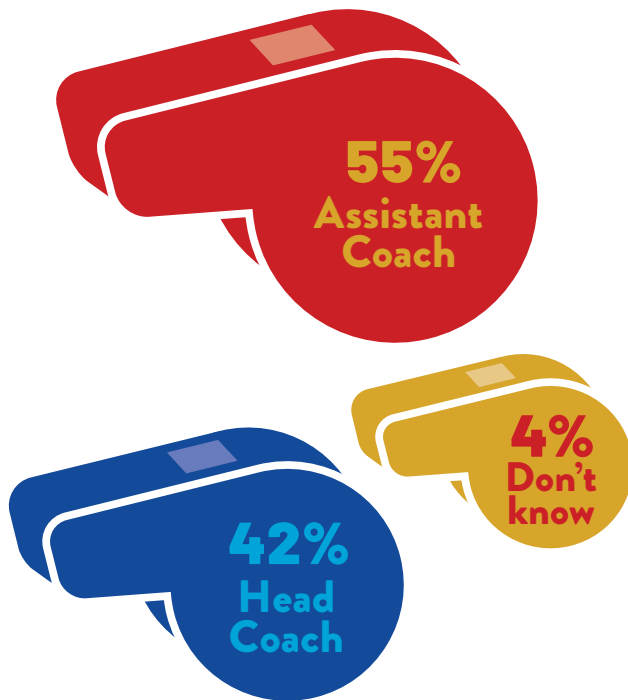
## 34% of coaches identify as part of an equity deserving group



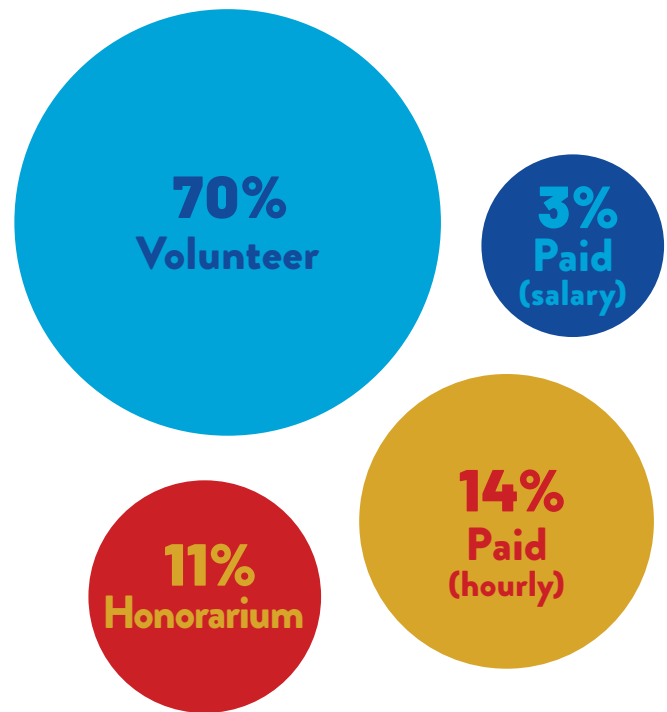
## Number of Years Coaching



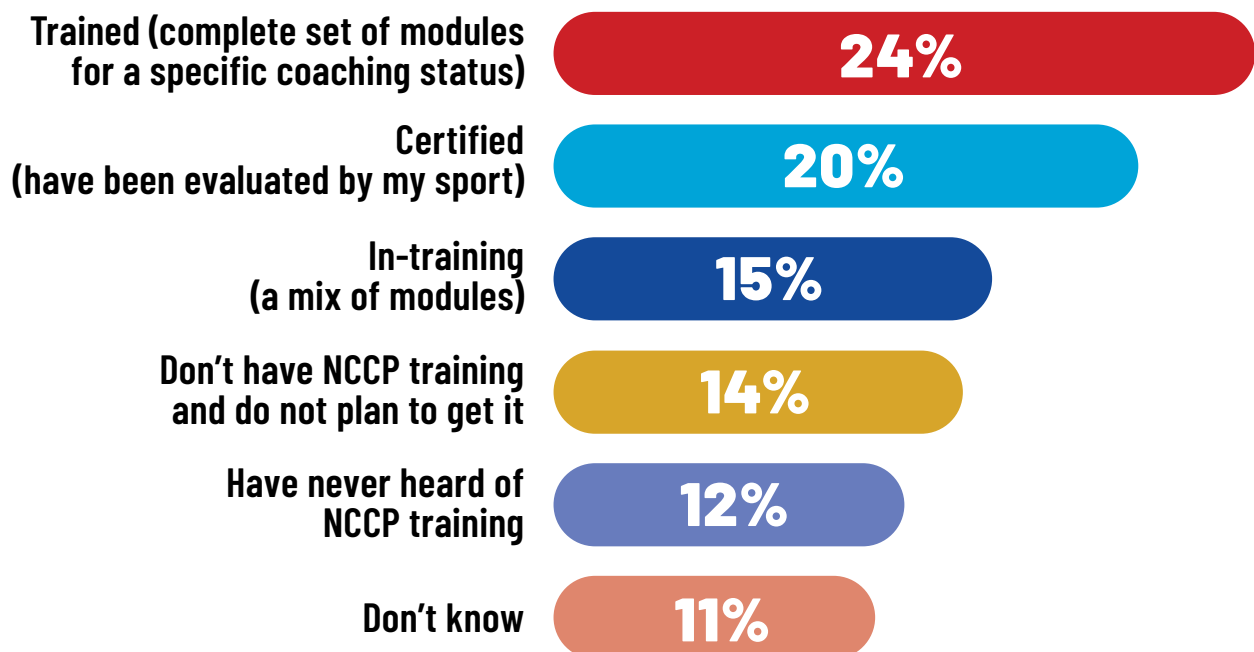
## Primary Coaching Role



## Coaching Position Type



## National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) Status



# Recommendations – Coaches

## 1. Reflect on how your coaching behaviours align with the positive sport values.

- 8 in 10 coaches (83%) believe sport culture, which is based on values and behaviour, is important to their coaching (see page 11).
- Looking at the many behaviours outlined in this report, some positive and some negative, reflect on how you do or do not incorporate these actions into your sport environment and why.
- Use the reflection exercise below, developed by [Wade Gilbert](#)<sup>24</sup>, to better clarify and align your values with your coaching behaviours.

## 2. Hold at least one parent/guardian meeting and clarify your coaching philosophy, values, and expectations.

- A clarified coaching philosophy gives coaches a clear and aligned decision-making process while establishing the values and team culture for athletes, parents, and staff.<sup>14</sup>
- 21% of coaches report never holding a parent meeting (see page 26) where this can be communicated.
- Holding a parent/guardian meeting encourages the support of values and behaviour expectations.

## 3. Create structured plans for practices informed by and centred around values.

- 1 in 3 coaches (33%) do not arrive at practice with a pre-written plan and structure (see page 19). Planning your practice emphasizes skill development, organization and safety, while also being intentional about how you're helping your athletes learn.
- To better incorporate values into your team culture, [Jones & McLenaghan](#)<sup>15</sup> recommend focusing on a new target value each week in your planning, to more intentionally put these values into practice.
- Take [NCCP Planning a Practice](#)<sup>25</sup>.

## 4. Learn about the effects of punishment and hazing, as well as what these behaviours look like.

- While the majority of coaches (86%) agreed that sport hazing is a serious issue (see page 27), almost 20% of coaches reported a positive view of hazing-like initiation practices (see page 28 for specific behaviours) and 29-37% of coaches use punishment to “teach” their athletes (see page 21).
- Punishment interferes with athletes developing “a positive sense of self and positive relationships with others,”<sup>16</sup> risking their dropout from sport.
- Review [CAO's Safe Sport 101 Playbook](#)<sup>26</sup>, specifically the [Hazing Prevention Playbook](#)<sup>27</sup> and the [Punishment and Discipline module](#)<sup>28</sup>.



## Exercise: Aligning Coach and Athlete Values

Take time to reflect on the following questions:

### What matters to me?

1. Why am I motivated to coach?
2. Why is coaching important to me and the type of contribution I want to make with my life?
3. How will I approach my role as a coach?
4. How will I ensure that I am being true to my purpose and core values?

### What matters to my athlete?

1. What motivates my athletes to play?
2. Why is [sport] so important to them and the type of life they want to live?
3. How are current cultural values impacting their views on sport and life?

### What matters to both of us?

1. Where do our motives overlap?
2. How can I use my understanding of their motives and values to help teach them about my values and our program values?
3. Who are my athlete leaders who can serve as models, and help teach, our values?

\*Note: Information about resources or courses mentioned in the recommendation's sections can be found in "Recommendation Resources" below the Endnotes.



# Recommendations – Parents

## 1. Have regular contact with your child's coach(es) and ask them how you can help.

- Ask coaches to outline expectations for parents/guardians and other actors [coaches, athletes, etc.] at the beginning of the season.<sup>17</sup>
- Ask coaches how and when they keep parents/guardians informed throughout the season (i.e., emails, newsletters, meetings, etc.).<sup>17</sup>

## 2. Be aware of your behaviours as a sport parent, and how you model appropriate sport behaviour to your child.

- 1 in 3 (up to 32%) of coaches report more than half of their teams' parents/guardians trash talk opposing teams or athletes, and criticize officials during the game, criticize their child, and criticize other children on the team (see page 34).
- How you speak to your child about sport impacts how much your child enjoys and continues to participate in sport.<sup>29</sup>
- Use the [strategies outlined by Tamminen](#)<sup>29</sup> for the car ride home, to have positive and productive sport conversations with your child:
  - ◆ **Give time to think, and take time to think:** give your child and yourself time after the sport event to relax and speak from a calm, intentional place.

- ◆ **Develop "rules of the road":** have conversations about yours and your child's preferences for post-game conversations.
- ◆ **Ask questions in a supportive manner:** "Ask questions in a way that invites your athlete to share their experiences with you, exploring what happened during competition, rather than adopting a confrontational tone."
- ◆ **Be positive:** being supportive regardless of the sport outcome and highlighting your child's strengths.

## 3. Support your child's exploration of different sports (sport sampling) before specializing in one (see page 31).

- The training intensity of sport specialization, especially in younger athletes, heightens the risk of injury, stress, burnout, and sport dropout.<sup>8</sup> Early specialization is not a pre-requisite to becoming an elite-level athlete.<sup>10</sup>
- Pursuing a range of sports before adolescence (around 13 years old) helps athletes develop diverse movement skills, athleticism, and dimensions of their identity, which enhances their abilities for specialization later.<sup>10</sup>
- Encourage your child to explore different sports throughout childhood, waiting to specialize until they're 13 years or older.

# Recommendations – Sport Organizations

## 1. Develop resources, education, and standards for parents and guardians as actors in the sport environment.

- There is a need for clear, widely applicable etiquette standards and expectations for parents/guardians, as reflected by the variety of positive and negative observed behaviours in this report.
- Some parents/guardians may not have grown up playing sports and, even for those that did, the sport landscape has changed significantly over time; parents can benefit from coaching on positive sport behaviours and keeping their kids safe in sport.

## 2. Develop hazing prevention education and mandate the creation of hazing policies.

- Much of hazing involves behaviours that aren't initiated by the coach; not only is there a need for education on minimizing hazing behaviours, but also how coaches can safely communicate, intervene, and discipline in these situations.
- Understanding hazing culture is critical for change. Many view hazing as harmless team bonding, but changing this narrative requires awareness and open dialogue.
- Recognizing new team members is crucial; however coaches need to ensure activities are voluntary and enhance communication, mutual respect, and belonging.

## 3. Communicate the values of positive sport to coaches, parents, and athletes, and how to live them in practice.

- As reflected in this report, we are not always living our values in sport.
- 83% of coaches believe sport culture is important to their coaching; 87% believe they successfully build the sport culture they want to with their athletes. Yet, 39% of coaches reported not knowing what values make up a positive sport culture (see page 11) The values of sport in Canada have been stated, but not sufficiently implemented or reinforced.
- This report analyzed major sport organizations' values to create 8 values that were shared. Each organization had similar values, but all were phrased and emphasized differently, reflecting the Public Policy Forum's call for "common language and shared definitions" for values-based sport.<sup>4</sup>

## 4. Mandate training and hazing policies across sport in Canada.

- An educated coach is a safer, more informed coach.
- Mandate NCCP training and Safe Sport 101.
- Mandate implementation of hazing policies with enforcement mechanisms.

# Organizational Sport Values

## Canadian Olympic Committee<sup>21</sup>

Excellence

Fun

Fairness

Respect

Human Development

Leadership

Peace

## CAO's 8 Positive Sport Values

Fun

Performance & Results

Skill Development & Learning

Fair Play & Ethics

Safe Sport & Respect

Athlete Health (Physical & Mental)

Participation & Inclusion

Connection & Community Building

## True Sport<sup>20</sup>

Go For It

Play Fair

Respect Others

Keep It Fun

Stay Healthy

Include Everyone

Give Back



## Canadian Sport Policy (2012)<sup>19</sup>

Fun

Safety

Excellence

Commitment

Personal Development

Inclusion & Accessibility

Respect, Fair Play & Ethical Behaviour

## NCCP - Code of Ethics<sup>23</sup>

Leadership & Professionalism

Health & Safety

Respect & Integrity

## Sport for Life / LTAD - Quality Sport<sup>22</sup>

Fun

Fair

Holistic

Safe

Inclusive & Welcoming

Participant Centered

Progressive & Challenging

Meaningful Competition

Trained Coaches, Officials, Instructors & Teachers

Knowledgeable Parents

Supportive Partners

Responsible Leaders



# Methodology

**The Ontario Coaching Report is the only study of its kind, which looks at the overall landscape of Ontario coaches and coaching, across all sport and recreation settings.**

**Our goal was to compare coach behaviours, values, and beliefs against the Positive Sport Values and ideal coaching behaviours.**

- The Coaches Association of Ontario (CAO), in partnership with Hydro One and Leger, created this study to provide coaches, parents, and organizations with information that will allow for a more inclusive, fun and safe sport environment.
- We asked about coaches' demographics and status, behaviours, values, beliefs. We also asked about coaches' perspectives on parent and athlete behaviours, as well as team build and initiation behaviours.

- This report shares the most important findings with you.

## **Survey Details & Methodology:**

- 1,000 Ontario coaches, 18+.
- A comprehensive online survey using Leger's online panel.
- Completed between August 6th - 21st, 2024.
- Margin of error - For comparison purposes, a probability sample of this size would have a margin of error of  $\pm 3.1\%$ , (19 times out of 20).
- Criteria for survey respondents were:
  - ◆ Ontario residents
  - ◆ Aged 18+
  - ◆ Had coached in the last 2 years (have you provided any sport coaching, instruction, or mentorship, either to an individual or a group/team, of any age for a recreational or sporting activity?)
- The survey was designed and developed collaboratively between the CAO and Leger, the latter of which is the largest Canadian-owned market research and analytics company.
- This report builds off the 2023 Coaching Report Card, published by the CAO.

## **Formatting:**

- When this report talks about coach findings, we are always referring to "coaches who participated in the survey", but may only use the term "coaches".
- Responses were often collected on a scale of Always, Often, Sometimes, Never, I don't know. For many of the stats listed in the report, x% of coaches are a combination of Always and Often for simplicity of communication (same for Sometimes and Never).
- Percentages in the report have been rounded to the nearest whole number.
- For most charts we have not displayed the "I don't know" option when it was only 1-3%.

## **How to cite this report:**

Coaches Association of Ontario, 2024 Ontario Coaching Report, (November 2024).

# Endnotes

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# Acknowledgments



Brittania Brown                      Jeremy Cross  
Brooke Leonardo                     Megan Sherwin  
Eric Belahov                         Mercedes Watson  
Eric McLoughlin                     Sarah Kelly  
   Stuart McLaren

## Research Support

Megan Gregorchuk, M.Ed.  
Jay Johnson, University of Manitoba

Design by Damien Martin



**5 Pin Bowling • 10 Pin Bowling • Alpine • Para Alpine  
Archery • Para Archery • Artistic Swimming • Athletics  
Para Athletics • Badminton • Para Badminton • Ball Hockey  
Baseball • Basketball • Biathlon • Boccia • Boxing • Broomball  
Canoe Kayak • Climbing • Cricket • Cross Country Ski • Curling  
Cycling • Para Cycling • Diving • Equestrian • Fencing  
Field Hockey • Figure Skating • Football • Football 5-A-Side  
Freestyle Skiing • Goalball • Golf • Grappling • Gymnastics  
Ice Hockey • Judo • Para Judo • Karate • Kickboxing  
Lacrosse • Lawn Bowls • Luge • Muay Thai • Orienteering  
Powerlifting • Ringette • Rowing • Para Rowing • Rugby  
Sailing • Shooting • Ski Jumping • Snowboard • Soccer  
Softball • Special Olympics • Squash • Swimming  
Table Tennis • Taekwondo • Para Taekwondo • Tennis  
Volleyball • Water Polo • Water Ski and Wakeboard  
Weightlifting • Wheelchair Tennis • Wrestling • Wushu**

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