



**JANUARY 2025**

# **Fair Play**

Understanding the Current State of Racial  
Inclusion in Canadian High Performance Sport

Despite growth in  
the racial diversity of  
Canada's population<sup>1</sup>,

**only 14%**  
**of racialized**  
**Canadians**  
**report regular**  
**participation**  
**in sport;**

less than half the rate  
of white Canadians<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> Representation of racialized communities in Canada has grown from 4.7% in 1981 to 26.5% in 2021.  
Source: *Canadian Census, 2021*

<sup>2</sup> Racialized Canadians report participating in sport on a regular basis at less than half the rate of white Canadians (14% vs 35%).  
Source: *Vividata, Summer 2024*

# Achieving an Equitable Future for All Athletes

“Inclusion is not a strategy to help people fit into the systems and structures which exist in our societies. It is about transforming those systems and structures to make it better for everyone. Inclusion is about creating a better world for everyone.”

– DIANE RICHLER, PAST PRESIDENT OF INCLUSION INTERNATIONAL

As the Canadian sport system evolves, new and existing challenges have emerged across the changing landscape highlighted by the need for sport to be a safe, barrier-free, and inclusive space for all. The path forward presents a great opportunity for the sport system to transform, to be more equitable to all athletes. A more equitable sport ecosystem develops stronger communities, better athletes, a more robust high performance talent pool, and greatness that inspires even more Canadians. That is the power of sport.

In order to move forward, partners and participants in the sport system need to assess and understand the current landscape. *Fair Play: Understanding the Current State of Racial Inclusion in Canadian High Performance Sport*, seeks to promote a stronger understanding of the experiences of existing and exited racialized athletes within the high performance sport pathway in Canada.

## Key Insights of the Research Findings

1. **Access:** Socioeconomic forces have the largest impact on a racialized athlete's ability to succeed in high performance sport. However, through strategic partnerships and unifying efforts, sport organizations can help to promote change in this area.
2. **Inclusion:** Experiences of racism and discrimination are cited as a common occurrence amongst racialized athletes. Yet, by aligning racial equity and anti-racism work with existing priorities, greater opportunities for participation of racialized athletes will arise as a result.
3. **Representation:** Athletes from diverse racial backgrounds want to see themselves represented at the highest levels of sport. While there are ongoing efforts to improve in this area, representation of racialized communities in sport is still largely incomplete.



The bottom line, athletes from diverse racial backgrounds face greater barriers to sport participation overall than non-racialized athletes, often starting sport later and entering sport through different pathways. In addition, racialized athletes may be unprepared for, overlooked for, or miss out on the opportunities to advance to higher levels of competition altogether. As a result, the Canadian sport system is drawing on a limited talent pool to drive success at the high performance level.

This independent research paper, conducted by Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC) and Wasserman, provides readers with a better understanding of the lived experiences of racialized athletes in high performance sport. The data highlights the current landscape of racial equity, sport, and DEI practices, while identifying opportunities to create a more inclusive, barrier-free sport environment moving forward. This study seeks to provide a starting point for future impact and investment, while also growing understanding around the experiences of those who opted out of sport.

This multi-faceted research was conducted by the Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC) and Wasserman in 2024, and funded by RBC Foundation and the Canadian Olympic Foundation, with the goal of specifically analyzing high performance sport — a sport subsystem that supports athletes on the Podium Pathway — and the associated barriers to entry for racialized athletes.

Phase 1 included understanding the current state of racial equity and inclusion in Canadian sport, by leveraging syndicated market research, academic literature review, a review of existing DEI programs, and a survey of 30 National Sport Organizations.

Phase 2 sought to understand the unique experiences and pathways of racialized individuals through a custom survey of 2,400+ athletes, as well as in-depth focus

groups with 37 athletes and industry representatives. Further details on the methodology of the study can be found within the Methodology section.

This work takes a data driven approach, seeking to understand the current pathways to high performance sport, and the barriers faced among racialized athletes in Canada. This includes the efforts already being done by Canadian sport organizations, which are highlighted throughout the study, shining a light on the positive momentum that has been seen in recent years. This research intends to highlight where the Canadian sport system is today, and provide insights to help frame future opportunities to make the high performance pathway within the Canadian sport system more inclusive for all.

Please note that this report includes topics of discrimination and racism, which may be triggering for some readers. The research study aims to address these sensitive issues with the utmost respect and care, as we recognize the profound impact they have on individuals and communities. Readers are encouraged to engage with the content mindfully and seek support if needed.



Funding in partnership by:

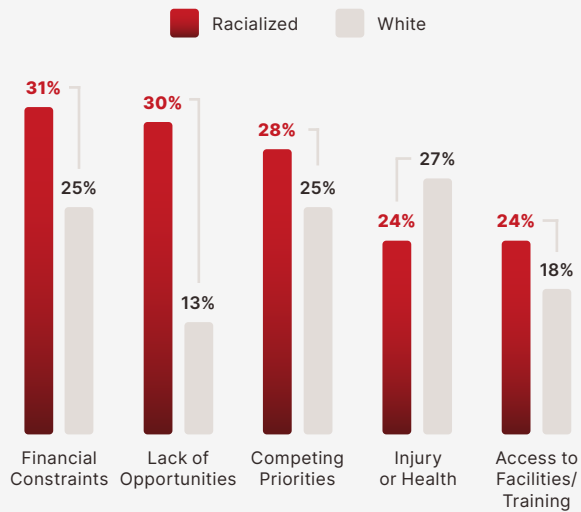


It is important to clarify how terms are used throughout this study and document, as their meanings can vary based on individual perspectives and experiences. Refer to the [Glossary](#) page for term definitions as needed.

# The Podium Pathway for Racialized Athletes Holds Significant Barriers

In general, research shows that participation rates between racialized and white athletes vary greatly based on a number of factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, type of sport, and competition level. The findings of the survey also identified unique challenges for racialized athletes linked to affordability, gender, and sport pathways.

Participation rates vary from sport to sport based on a number of stated barriers.



Racialized athletes are far more likely to be impacted by **financial constraints** and/or **lack of opportunity** when it comes to participating in sport at a competitive level.

Athletes are exposed to sports from different sources.

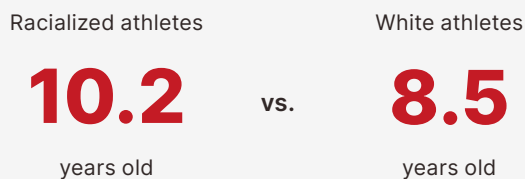


Racialized athletes are **13% less likely** to be introduced to sport by a parent or guardian.



Racialized athletes are **13% more likely** to be introduced to sport through school.

On average, racialized athletes start playing sports 1.7 years later than white athletes.



The gender gap persists within this group of athletes.



While these statistics make it overwhelmingly evident that a change is in order, it is important to note that there is significant progress already underway by National Sport Organizations (NSOs), as well as many other organizations, across the country, to directly impact positive change in this area. As such, in this study there are several examples highlighting the great work that NSOs are currently doing to make a difference.



# Insights for Future Impact

The research found that significant barriers exist for racialized athletes in sport, which can be identified through three key insights. Through a data-driven approach, supported by examples of lived experience, the pages that follow highlight the three key insights where current challenges and future opportunities to improve the high performance pathway exist.

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**01.**

## **Access**

Athletes need affordable opportunities to train and compete in sport environments that are easily accessible, within their home communities.

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**02.**

## **Inclusion**

Athletes need teammates, coaches, and training and competition environments that allow for equitable advancement and make them feel safe, welcomed, and included.

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**03.**

## **Representation**

Athletes need to see themselves represented in sport. They need coaches and leaders with lived experiences, who can act in ways that respect and reflect the needs of the diverse communities that make up Canada.

# 01. Access

**“My mom couldn’t afford to pay for rugby, so it was organizations like Jumpstart, and a local one called Fair Opportunity. They paid most of my fees because, for my mom, it would literally be like, pay rent or hydro or enroll me in sports.”**

**– WOMEN’S RUGBY PLAYER**



## 01. ACCESS

The Challenge:

# Building Equitable Access to Sport



**1 in 4** athletes are impacted by barriers related to access, whether that be financial or physical.

Ultimately, there are three key driving issues of access for racialized athletes in the high performance pathway.

### Cost of Programs and Equipment:

When isolated for high performance athletes, financial constraints were cited by **6.5% more racialized athletes** than white athletes.

### Transportation Options:

Racialized athletes are **20% more likely to rely on public transportation** to be able to participate or train in their sport compared to white athletes.

### Proximity to Programming and Facilities:

On average, racialized athletes **travel 2.2km farther** to attend training and practice sessions with their sport. Also noting that sport facilities are more difficult to access due to distance **6% more often** for racialized athletes than for white athletes.



Based on the data, access has the largest impact on a racialized athlete's ability to succeed in high performance sport (i.e. proximity, transportation, costs, etc.). Therefore, there are opportunities for societal changes to directly impact access and lead to positive change for athletes in these communities.

"People can't sacrifice everything in order to make it to a high level of sport and I think that's one of the reasons, like for myself and a lot of my peers at the end of university, we decided to pursue other things to pay the bills."

- RETIRED WOMEN'S ATHLETICS ATHLETE



The Opportunity:

# Strategic Partnerships and Community Engagement

Through **strategic partnerships and unifying efforts**, sport organizations have already begun to work collaboratively to identify solutions and advocate for change in this area.

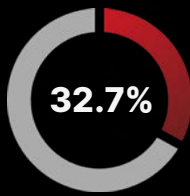
While the most common barriers to sport participation — cost and facility access — are beyond the direct control of most key players, sport organizations and other invested partners, including advocacy groups, municipalities, and school boards, still hold the power to promote change. In coming together to align on community needs and priorities, these groups can help to improve access to existing sport facilities, as well as lobby for government support to build and maintain new infrastructure.

**On a larger scale, collaborative efforts to sponsor and host national and international sporting events create opportunities for investment in infrastructure that will benefit local communities as a long-term legacy.**

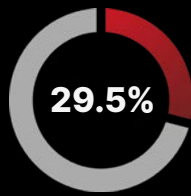


## 01. ACCESS

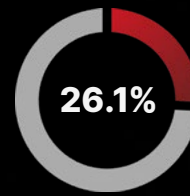
The top three solutions cited by racialized athletes to improve access or remove barriers are:



Affordable /  
subsidized  
instruction



More opportunities  
to get involved  
(i.e at school or  
in the community)



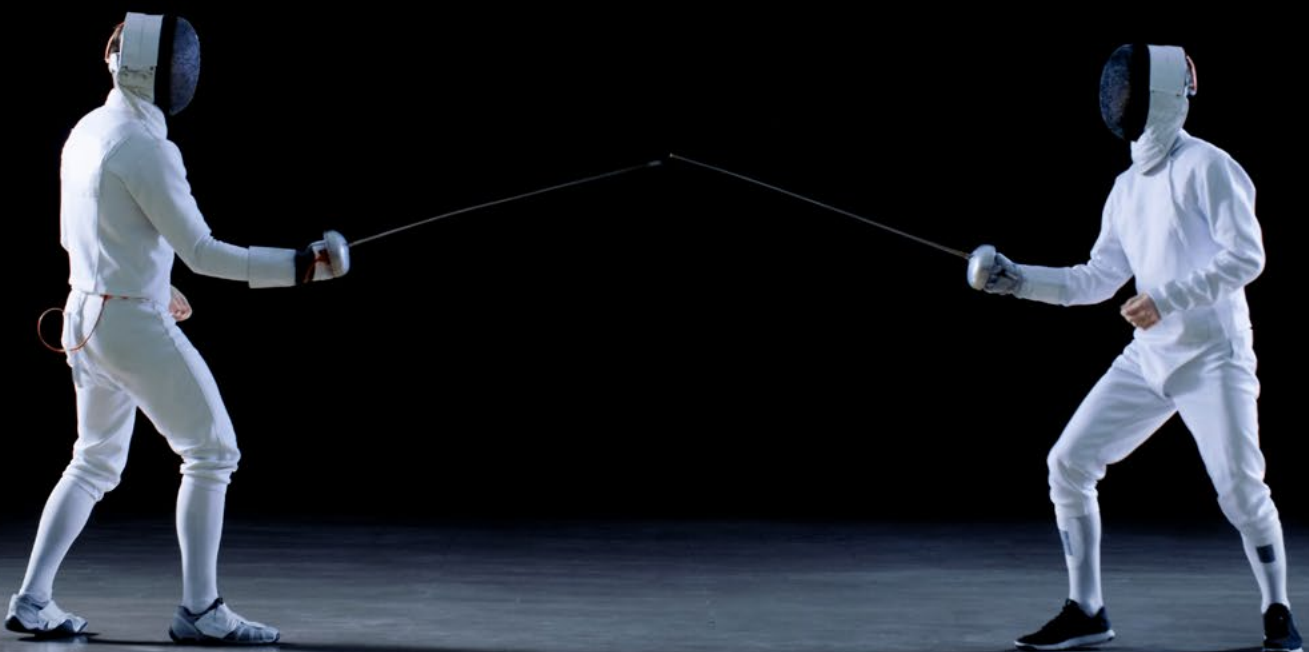
Better access to  
sports facilities

**“If I had that dream, it would be a dream of facility access for all youth that are close to home, accessible. But that’s magic wand thinking.”**

**– PROVINCIAL INDIGENOUS SPORT COUNCIL ADMINISTRATOR**

Looking towards the future, building relationships with the local communities at the centre of equity and inclusion work is the simplest way to learn about their needs and preferences, while also ensuring that facilities and programs are made accessible to diverse groups in terms of cost, location, transportation, language, scheduling, and programming opportunities.

Likewise, the voices of athletes or groups who will be impacted by sport-driven campaigns, initiatives, and movements should be central to decision-making inputs and processes.



## 01. ACCESS

Examples:

# Increasing Access to Sport



### Canada Snowboard

Canada Snowboard has implemented robust initiatives to integrate Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) through strategic partnerships with organizations like Inclusion Incorporated and ITP Sport and Recreation. In collaboration with Provincial & Territorial Snowboard Associations (PTSAs), Canada Snowboard aims to implement initiatives, policies, and procedures that embed EDIA principles, ensuring all events and programming are approached through an EDIA lens. Building on this work, Canada Snowboard has engaged ITP Sport and Recreation for a culture co-creation project. This initiative bridges EDIA efforts with safe sport priorities, fostering a culture that centres athletes' voices and positions Canada Snowboard as a sector leader.

[Learn more](#)



## 01. ACCESS

Examples:

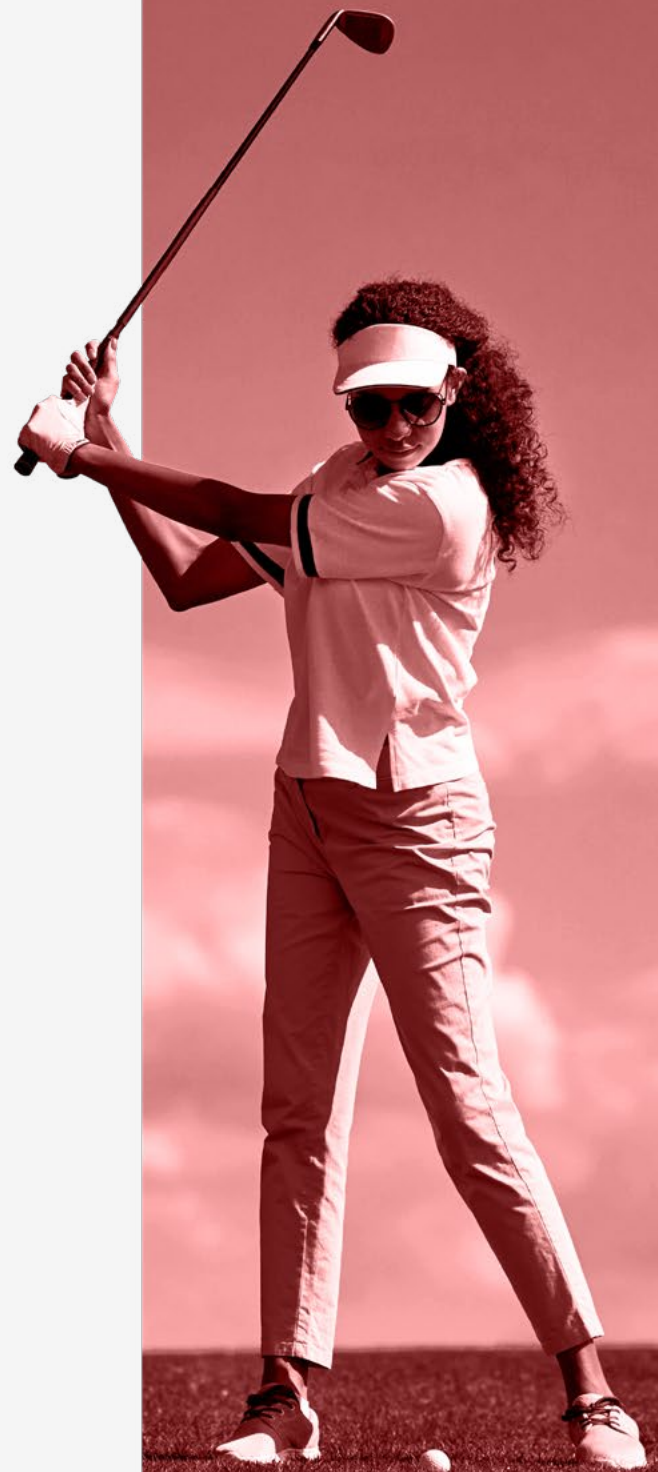
# Increasing Access to Sport



### **Golf Canada**

Golf Canada partnered with First Tee in 2020 to launch First Tee - Canada, a youth development program providing life-enhancing experiences through golf, with a focus on accessibility and inclusivity at golf courses, schools, and community centres. First Tee aims to make golf reflective of Canada's rich diversity by offering programming to equity-deserving youth nationwide. Since 2022, over 160 partnerships with organizations such as the Afro-Canadian Caribbean Association, Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre, and the Autism Society of Newfoundland Labrador have enabled more than 50,000 children to access programming at no cost, while continuing to foster community connections and expand opportunities for Canadian youth.

[Learn more](#)



# 02. Inclusion

A person in a soccer jersey is captured in a dynamic pose, kicking a soccer ball on a grassy field. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The person is wearing a white jersey with dark sleeves and dark shorts. The background shows a chain-link fence and some trees, suggesting an outdoor sports field.

**“It’s happened to me time and time again where I am brave enough to address discrimination and racism, there are consequences for me as an athlete and as a coach or a board member... I’m ostracized.”**

**– RETIRED WOMEN’S SOCCER PLAYER**

## 02. INCLUSION

The Challenge:

# Experiences of Racism and Discrimination

Racialized athletes are **2x** more likely to be challenged by discrimination within sports<sup>1</sup>. **77%** of this discrimination is racially motivated.

Experiences of racism and discrimination, no matter how deliberate or subtle in nature, can result in internalized harm, lowered self-worth, and feelings of confusion, anger, and isolation.

These challenges disproportionately affect racialized athletes and undermine their potential to advance in sport, regardless of the fact that their race is the one factor they have no control over, and no power to change.

<sup>1</sup> 13% of racialized athletes reported discrimination as a significant challenge (vs. 6% of white athletes).



## 02. INCLUSION

Racism and racial discrimination can include overt language or actions as well as more covert, subtle, and unspoken practices that disadvantage or harm one or more racialized groups. While overt forms of racism and discrimination must be addressed, this research points to the subtle and covert forms of racism that are *most likely* to impact racialized athletes.

In this study, athletes discussed the persistence of racist stereotypes, including unwanted attention being given to physical characteristics of athletes' bodies,

perceptions of racialized athletes as having 'raw' or natural talent more-so than developed skill, and expectations of what sport athletes should train and compete in based on their race.

Experiences of racialized athletes being treated differently than white members of a majority-white team were also common and included having different expectations placed on them, receiving less attention and fewer opportunities to compete, and being blamed or reprimanded for issues in play more frequently.



The Opportunity:

# Anti-Racism Awareness & Alignments

Racialized individuals are one of the largest and fastest-growing groups in Canada, representing more than **1 in 4 people** in the Canadian population<sup>1</sup>.

So, why aren't efforts to promote racial equity and anti-racism more of a priority? The truth is, resources and capacity are a consistent challenge for sport organizations working to meet a growing number of government and sport system priorities. Yet, by aligning racial equity and anti-racism work with existing priorities, such as diversity, equity, and inclusion and safe sport, greater opportunities for participation of racialized athletes will arise as a result.

For example, perpetuating racial discrimination and racism are clear violations of the *Universal Code of*

*Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS)*, and thus a clear safe sport issue. Building links between systemic priorities and generating awareness of these links may create the platform needed to bring racial equity and anti-racism to the forefront, while simultaneously advancing efforts to create a safe environment.

Overall, while positive momentum is being seen in this area, consistent, unified efforts to further promote racial equity and anti-racism at the systemic level are necessary in order to achieve further growth.

## Resource Spotlight:

- [Anti-Racism in Coaching Toolbox](#) by Coaching Association of Canada
- [Play Fair Anti-racism in Sports Toolkit](#) by the Inclusion in Canadian Sport Network
- [Sport is not an equal playing field: An Introduction to Anti-Racism Literacy and Action' workshop](#) by Anti-Racism in Sport Canada

Additional Resources for Exploration can be found on [Page 32](#).



<sup>1</sup> Representation of racialized communities in Canada has grown from 4.7% in 1981 to 26.5% in 2021.  
Source: *Canadian Census, 2021*

## 02. INCLUSION

Examples:

# Increasing Inclusion in Sport



### Canada Basketball

Unified 2024 was a multi-year program launched in 2021 designed to lead Canada Basketball's equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives and establish the organization as a leader within the Canadian sports industry by 2024.

Canada Basketball's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion and firm stance against racism, discrimination, and harassment are actioned in four key areas: maximizing education and awareness opportunities, ensuring balanced representation, developing equitable policies and procedures, and diversifying suppliers and strategic partnerships.

Among its many programs and initiatives, highlights of Canada Basketball's work include diversifying its Board of Directors, launching the Black Referee Summit and [National Indigenous Basketball Camp](#), and engaging its staff in unconscious bias and anti-racism education through a continued partnership with the BlackNorth Initiative.

[Learn more](#)



## 02. INCLUSION

Examples:

# Increasing Inclusion in Sport



### **Equestrian Canada**

In 2021, Equestrian Canada partnered with The Inclusion Project to develop a long-term plan to address systemic issues in the sport, including addressing systemic racism and toxicity within the community culture.

Since then, Equestrian Canada has launched several initiatives to advance its equity, diversity, and inclusion work. Examples include engaging in a readiness assessment with Waking the unConscious through the BlackNorth Initiative, preparing for the launch of a new diversity and inclusion policy, completing a research study on the history of colonialism in sport for education and training, and the formation of an Inclusion Working Group through its Board of Directors.

Moving forward, Equestrian Canada is developing a mentorship program to support the professional growth of underrepresented individuals in the equestrian community.

[Learn more](#)



# 03. Representation

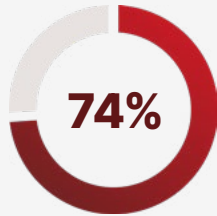
A group of women's rugby players are huddled together on a field, their arms around each other's shoulders. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The players are wearing dark jerseys and shorts, and white socks. The background shows a grassy field and some trees in the distance.

“When I started playing club in [province] in the summers when I came back from university, the coach was not white. That made a freaking huge difference, like when you know you’re in a space where you feel welcomed.”

– RETIRED WOMEN’S RUGBY PLAYER

The Challenge:

# Lack of Representation in Sport Leadership



of racialized athletes identifying as women feel that is it very important to see representation at the highest level.

For athletes, being able to recognize themselves amongst positions of influence within the sport that they play holds more merit than most would recognize — and even amidst ongoing efforts to improve in this area, representation of racialized communities in sport is still largely incomplete and lacking.

Focus group participants were quick to point out the value in athletes who ‘look like them’ represented on professional and national teams. Additionally, racialized athletes clearly articulated the profoundly positive impact of having a racialized coach or other leadership figure.

**“I think that there needs to be more representation on the boards in order for there to be real change and more education and resources for people like us where we feel safe to talk about a situation and feel supported in next steps and how we can resolve a situation.”**

**- RETIRED WOMEN'S SOCCER PLAYER**



### 03. REPRESENTATION

“Yeah, I would definitely say after I created my Black athletes student association, they helped me. I kind of found my people, found my friends... It was nice to talk to someone who’s kind of in the same boat as me, [that] was really helpful and just accessible.”

– WOMEN’S LACROSSE PLAYER

“I will say like I am usually chosen for [media] interviews... There’s one other Black girl and we always joke with each other that we are the diversity hires. And sometimes there’s a feeling of, ‘Why was I chosen for this?’ ... And I feel like the reason I was chosen isn’t because of my skill, so it diminishes my perception of myself.”

– WOMEN’S RUGBY PLAYER

Strategies, like featuring diverse athletes in marketing, advertising, and storytelling opportunities, are easy to implement — but it’s important not to engage in tokenism. Athletes should be celebrated for their authentic contributions to sport and their community. They shouldn’t wonder if the reason they’re being honoured has more to do with the colour of their skin.

Athletes and industry leaders in this study also alluded to the lack of diverse leadership at the board and staff level as a key factor in limiting a sport organization’s ability to meaningfully address issues of racial equity and inclusion. This was seen as a critical piece that shapes how reports of racism in sport contexts were handled.

Nevertheless, efforts to improve representation are being seen across the sports industry and beyond, proving that change is on the horizon.



The Opportunity:

# Connect, Elevate & Celebrate Racialized Athletes

Athletes from diverse racial backgrounds want to see themselves represented at the highest levels of sport, in advertising, in sport leadership positions, and beyond — this is a change that requires participation on all levels in order to truly hold merit.

It goes without saying that providing athletes with opportunities to connect with peers in sport who share similar backgrounds and experiences to them is highly inspirational. In addition to that, seeing racialized athletes respected and celebrated for their accomplishments both on and off the field of play provides hope for younger generations as they begin to take the field.

“And it’s like... if you have that diverse representation, then you know there are, you know, varying levels of experience and you have those people you can talk to about those, you know, those, those, difficult situations, and you know again how to navigate those waters.”

— RETIRED WOMEN’S SOCCER PLAYER

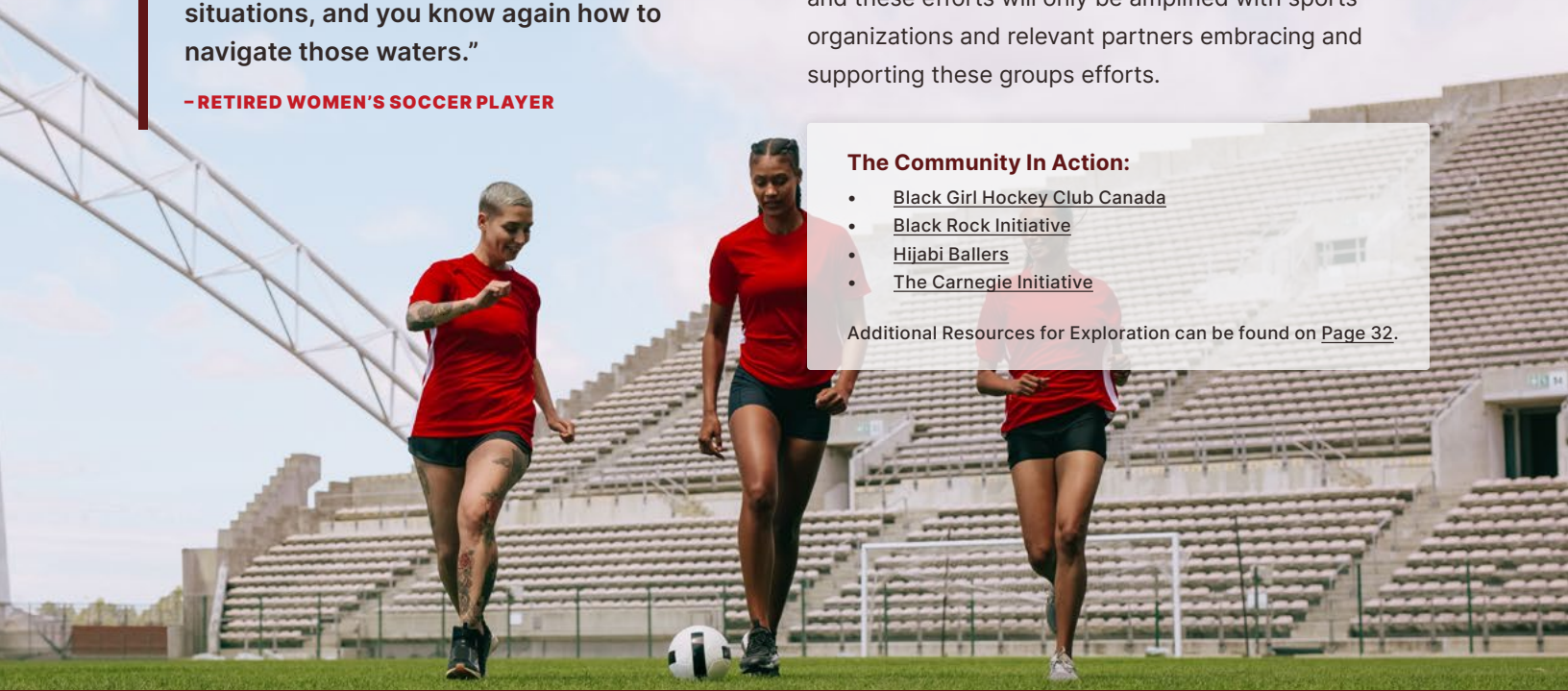
While much work has been done in this space to date, there are several approaches that sport organizations can take to continue charging towards these goals — building pathways for people with diverse lived experiences into sport leadership roles, including coaching, officiating, board governance, and executive leadership, is an important place to start. Targeted mentorship programs, inclusive hiring policies, and communities of practice are also effective strategies to elevate and build capacity for these roles in racialized communities.

There are several community groups already making strides towards increased representation in sport, and these efforts will only be amplified with sports organizations and relevant partners embracing and supporting these groups efforts.

#### The Community In Action:

- [Black Girl Hockey Club Canada](#)
- [Black Rock Initiative](#)
- [Hijabi Ballers](#)
- [The Carnegie Initiative](#)

Additional Resources for Exploration can be found on [Page 32](#).





### 03. REPRESENTATION

Examples:

# Increasing Representation in Sport



**Skate Canada**  
**Patinage Canada**

## Skate Canada

Skate Canada is committed to making equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, fundamental to all that they do.

Skating for Everyone is a strategic imperative in Skate Canada's 2022-2026 strategic plan. It's about creating a safe and welcoming environment for any individual (regardless of gender, age, sex, race, class, religion, ethnicity, ability, language, sexual orientation, or gender identity) to be their authentic self, learn to skate, and achieve their personal goals.

To address systemic racism, gender inequities, gender binary exclusion, and ableism, Skating for Everyone has resulted in the following actions and initiatives:

- Diverse leaders in Skating Mentorship Program
- Communities of practice
- Educational plans and resources
- Indigenous engagement and understanding Indigenous experiences
- Support for individuals with disabilities

**[Learn more](#)**



### 03. REPRESENTATION

Examples:

# Increasing Representation in Sport



## Canoe Kayak Canada

Canoe Kayak Canada (CKC) is committed to looking for opportunities to support, promote, and keep doing the work that needs to be done towards reconciliation. For example, CKC established an Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) to welcome guidance and input from key Indigenous leaders. Together with the IAC, CKC has developed two resources. The first resource helps members to start conversations centred around paddling, Indigenous Peoples, and reconciliation in sport. The second is an Elder Protocol Policy to establish respectful protocols for working with Elders and Knowledge Keepers. In addition to this work, CKC has secured grants to translate key program resources into Indigenous languages and to support ongoing research.

[Learn more](#)



# Reconciliation & Indigenous Inclusion

Reconciliation and Indigenous inclusion requires unique consideration in the context of racial equity and inclusion work.

It is acknowledged that the inherent rights to land, resources, culture, and community of indigenous Peoples has been systematically removed by colonization and because of that, there is a large responsibility towards reconciliation. Many of the places and spaces where sport takes place, from ski hills and golf courses to multi-sport training facilities, sit on traditional and unceded territory or land. The historic barring of Indigenous Peoples' access through fees, membership, or policy upholds Canada's removal of land access.

The sport community has a responsibility to advocate for Indigenous access to the spaces where sport takes place, and to recognize this history and the Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights to land.

## Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, Sports and Reconciliation

While all of the Calls to Action are important to understand and address, [Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Actions #87-91](#) focus specifically on promoting reconciliation through sport. Aligned with these actions, individuals and organizations in sport can work to educate themselves and understand the role they place in advancing these Calls to Action.

### Examples include:

- Supporting the Indigenous sport system and learning about Indigenous sport.
- Building Indigenous capacity to deliver sport programming.
- Intentionally telling Indigenous stories, histories, and current events.
- Celebrating Indigenous athletes — not just for their accomplishments in sport, but also for their contributions to community and culture.
- Including sports with Indigenous roots in high-level national and international competition, alongside appropriate attention to the cultural significance of the sport.
- Recognizing Indigenous sovereignty and providing unrestricted opportunities for Indigenous athletes to compete for their own community or nation.
- Engaging Indigenous communities and leaders in processes and decisions that impact their land and Peoples, including bids to host sport events and initiatives that impact Indigenous athletes.

“When Safe Sport was developed, it was not developed with an understanding of how it could impact our Indigenous communities and our Indigenous people. There was a lot of push back from our Indigenous communities and leadership around the inclusion of Indigenous culture, you know, because there was nothing in there about incorporating Elders. There was nothing in there incorporating ceremony. There was nothing in there of how to support our athletes and our communities if a situation arose and... it was very much that colonial kind of process.”

– INDIGENOUS LEADER & STAFF MEMBER AT A PROVINCIAL INDIGENOUS SPORT ORGANIZATION



# Looking Ahead

***Fair Play* seeks to provide an overview of the current state of racial inclusion in high performance sport and on the podium pathway, while also offering a means of measuring impact moving forward.**

In analyzing the current environment of the high performance sport system, key challenges faced by racialized athletes were identified, while also recognizing the great strides that have already been made towards a more equitable future.

This work highlights three key areas for future impact, providing opportunities throughout the sport system and beyond to promote change. The next generation of athletes need affordable opportunities to train and compete in sport environments that are easily accessible in their home communities (Access). They need teammates, coaches, training and competition environments that make them feel safe, welcomed, and included (Inclusion). And they need to see people who

look like them as role models and leaders in sport (Representation).

There is an opportunity for all partners and collaborators within Canadian sport systems to work together to create more inclusive, barrier-free sport experiences for racialized athletes on the path to high performance sport. A collective and collaborative approach with a focus on research, understanding, and acknowledgement of the gaps that currently exist is needed in paving a new path forward for racial equity and anti-racism in sport. This research reaffirms that there's room for improvement within the pathway to high performance sport, and that tangible opportunities for future change do exist.





# Fair Play

January 2025

# Glossary

**Anti-Racism:** The active process of identifying, challenging, and dismantling racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies, practices, and attitudes to promote racial equity. It goes beyond merely opposing racism and involves taking proactive steps to confront and address the root causes of racial discrimination and inequality.

**Bias:** The inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, particularly in a way that is considered to be unfair. Bias can be conscious (explicit) or unconscious (implicit), and it often manifests in attitudes, behaviours, and decisions that contribute to the perpetuation of racial inequalities and discrimination.

**Competitive Sport:** Actively involved in organized leagues or tournaments with a focus on competition and/or winning.

**Discrimination:** The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, particularly on the grounds of race, age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or other characteristics.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):** Three linked principles that aim to ensure all people — including those from historically under-represented groups such as but not limited to different races, religions, ethnicities, abilities, genders and sexual orientations — are welcomed, included and treated fairly.

**Equity:** A fairness or justice in the way people are treated, and especially freedom from bias or favouritism. Specifically, racial equity refers to freedom from disparities in the way that people of difference races are treated. While equality means treating everyone the same regardless of their differences, equity means that everyone is provided with the resources and support they need based on their unique circumstances.

**High Performance Sport:** The Canadian High Performance Sport Strategy defines high performance as a sport system that supports athletes that have stepped onto the Podium Pathway (or equivalent). It includes the resources and support personnel in place to support them that culminates in performance at the Olympic or Paralympic Games and/or single sport Senior World Championships.

**Organized Sport:** Sport that consists of structured competition, follows a defined set of rules and is governed and officiated by an organized body. This project focused on sports that are eligible to compete at

the Olympic Games in line with the COC's Team Canada Impact Agenda goal to field the most diverse Team Canada ever by 2032.

**Podium Pathway:** Athletes on a trajectory toward podium results at the highest level of their sport. This may include athletes identified by their sport as being most likely to represent Canada on the international stage, including junior national teams and senior national teams, as well as those athletes identified through Next Gen talent identification programs.

**Racism:** The process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race, reinforcing disparities in wealth, health, education, and justice. Forms of racism can include: systemic (or institutional) racism, structural racism, personal racism, overt racism, covert racism, and/or casual racism.

**Race:** A term used to classify people into groups based principally on physical traits such as skin colour. Racial categories are not based on science or biology but on differences that society has created (i.e. "socially constructed"). Racial categories may vary over time and place and can overlap with ethnic, cultural, or religious groupings.

**Racialized Persons and Groups:** Individuals or groups who self-identify as 'racialized' or as belonging to a race other than white. This may include experiencing racial meanings attributed to them in ways that affect their social, political, or economic lives. This category includes, but is not limited to, those classified as 'visible minorities' under the Canadian census and Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit).

**Stereotypes:** A widely held but oversimplified and generalized belief or idea about a particular group of people.

**Tokenism:** Refers to the practice of making a superficial or insincere effort to include members of racialized or other minority groups, often for the sake of appearance rather than genuine inclusion.

**White Person and Groups:** Identifies their race as 'white'. The idea of 'white' as a race is a societal construct maintained through historical processes. While the specific ethnic origins (i.e., Italian, Irish, German, etc.) are important for individual identity, the umbrella term 'white' has been used to group these diverse ethnicities in a shared racial category.

# Additional Resources for Exploration

Please note that the list of resources compiled below is not exhaustive. It is a starting point for further education on racial equity and inclusion in the high performance sport pathway.

## How to get started

- [Aboriginal Coaching Modules — Aboriginal Sport Circle](#)
- [Anti-Racism in Coaching Toolbox — Coaching Association of Canada](#)
- [Anti-Racism Resources — AthletesCAN](#)
- [EDI Resources — Coaching Association of Canada](#)
- [Play Fair Anti-Racism in Sports Toolkit — Inclusion in Canadian Sports Network](#)
- ['Sport is not an equal playing field: An introduction to Anti-Racism Literacy and Action' workshop — Anti-Racism in Sport Canada](#)
- [Team Canada Anti-Racism Resources — Canadian Olympic Committee \(COC\)](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)

## Where to learn more

- [Aboriginal Sport Circle](#)
- [Anti-Racism in Sport Canada](#)
- [Athletes CAN](#)
- [Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [Canadian Women and Sport](#)
- [EveryBody Moves Resource Hub](#)
- [Inclusion in Canadian Sports Network](#)
- [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#)
- [Sport for Life](#)





# Credits

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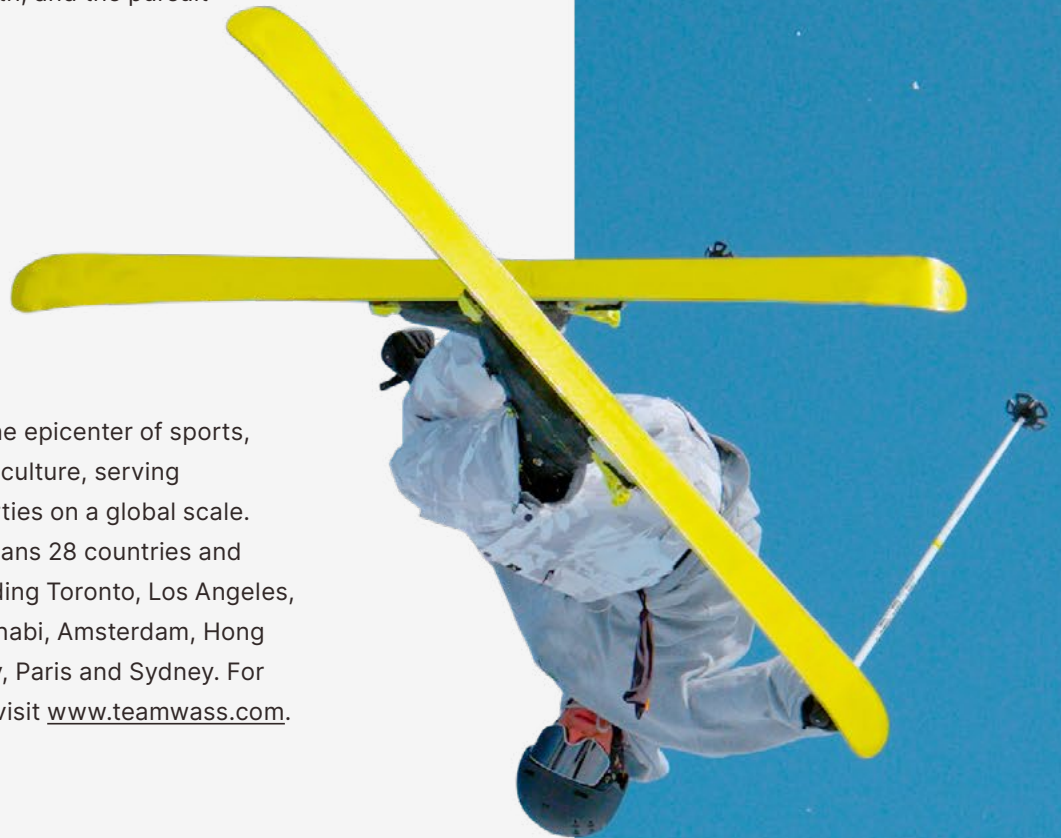
# Credits

## **Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC)**

Incorporated in 1973, SIRC, the Sport Information Resource Centre, is Canada's leader and most trusted partner in advancing sport through knowledge and evidence. SIRC is committed to engaging with organizations and individuals involved in the development of sport, recreation and physical education in Canada and around the world, to enhance the capacity of our shared community to foster growth, and the pursuit of excellence.

## **Wasserman**

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# Research Methodology

## **Phase 1:** Profiling the current state of racial equity and inclusion in Canadian sport

The first phase of research leveraged desk research and National Sport Organization (NSO) outreach to profile the current state of racial equity and inclusion in Canadian sport.

### **Five key research activities were undertaken:**

1. An analysis of syndicated market research to better understand the landscape of youth sport participation in Canada.
2. A literature review summarizing academic and non-academic research findings focused on racialized athletes' experiences, participation rates, and barriers to participation.
3. A survey of NSOs to identify and collect data around NSO-level Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives and sport participation rates/barriers among racialized athletes.
4. A review of NSO annual reports, strategic plans, and website information to identify current priorities, programs and initiatives focused on racial equity and inclusion.
5. A scan of DEI initiatives (with a focus on racial equity) that exist outside of the NSO ecosystem, primarily among professional leagues.

## **Phase 2:** Identifying key barriers and opportunities for impact

The second phase of research generated new data to better understand the experiences and pathways of athletes in Canadian sport, including key barriers faced by racialized athletes and opportunities to advance racial equity and inclusion.

### **Three key research activities were undertaken:**

1. A primary survey was conducted using respondents from a consumer panel of Canadians, ensuring a demographically representative sample with regards to age, gender, household income and geography. Overall, 80% of total respondents identified as racialized (non-white) from 11 racial backgrounds, representing a mixture of athletic backgrounds (current and retired athletes) who compete recreationally, competitively or in high performance sport. In total, 2,442 responses were collected from the 57-question survey. Respondents represented 20 different sports, all at varying levels of competition. In addition to the consumer panel, an 'organic' sample of 54 current high performance athletes was solicited through existing Canadian Olympic Committee and Sport Information Resource Centre channels, which added context to the responses, representing athletes currently in the system.
2. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with current and former, competitive and high performance athletes identifying as North American Indigenous, East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Black, Caribbean, and Latin American. A total of 24 athletes (15 women, 9 men) representing 15 different sports (13 summer, 2 winter) at the provincial (33%), national (8%) and international or professional (58%) levels participated in an interview (n = 4, one-on-one) or focus group (n = 5, 2-5 athletes per group).
3. Round table discussions were conducted with sport system representatives engaged in DEI-focused work. A total of 13 representatives (9 women, 3 men, 1 nonbinary) from universities, Indigenous sport organizations, community sport initiatives for racialized participants, DEI and anti-racism in sport-focused organizations, women-focused sport organizations, and a major games council participated in a round table (n = 3, 4-5 representatives per group).

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