



WOMEN IN SPORT: FUELLING A LIFETIME OF PARTICIPATION

A REPORT ON

THE STATUS OF FEMALE SPORT PARTICIPATION IN CANADA.

*Made possible by Canada's dairy farmers & The Canadian Association
for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS).*

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THE FOREWORD

From the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women & Sport & Physical Activity.

“As we will see in this report, there is still more work to be done for girls and women to realize all the benefits that sport offers. The next step will be the need for action to address these findings.”

Jennifer Fenton - CAAWS Chair
Karin Lofstrom - CAAWS Executive Director



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OUR ADVISORY GROUP

We owe gratitude to the following influential persons in Canadian sport who lent their expertise:



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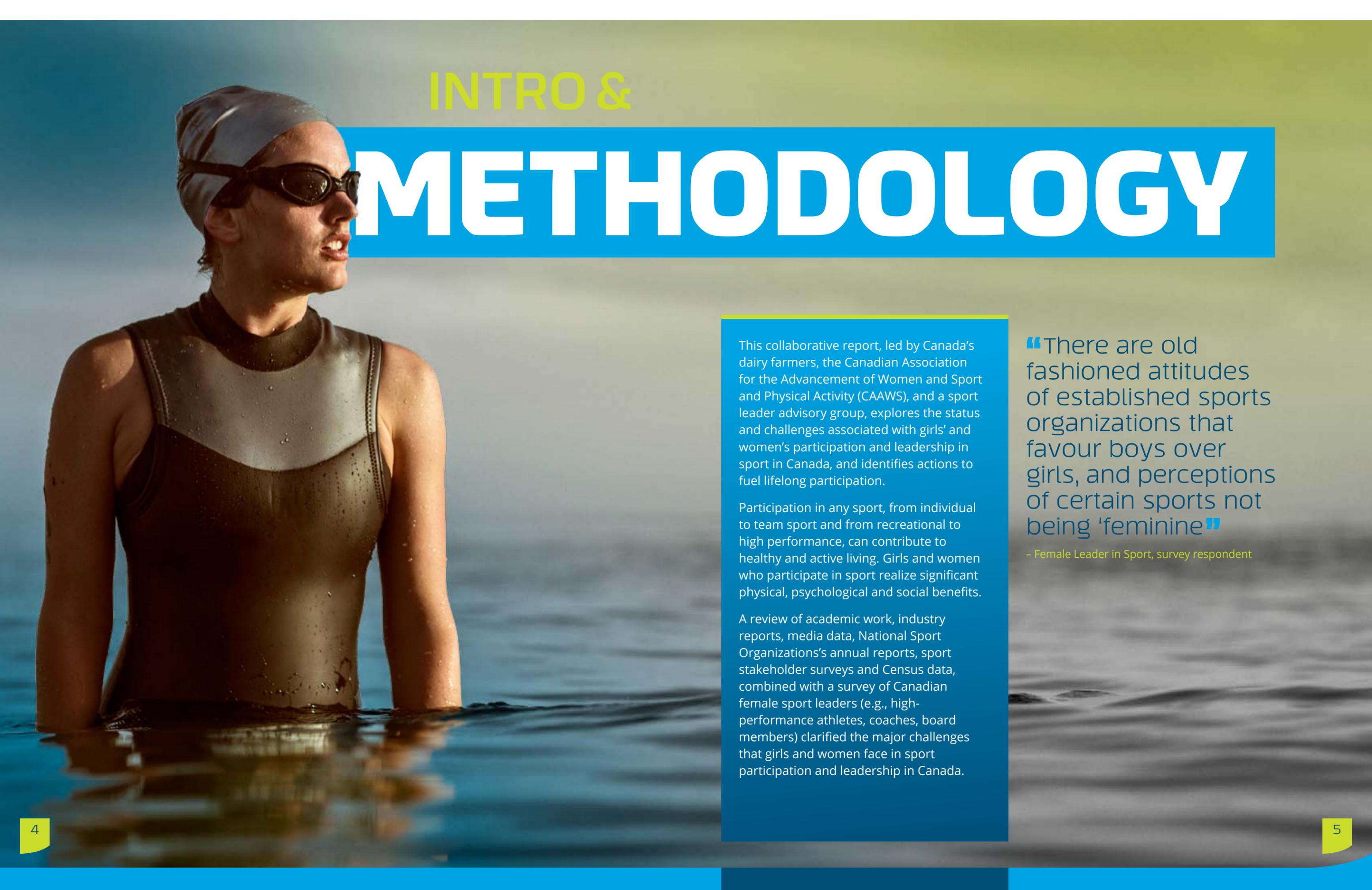
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INTRO &

METHODOLOGY

This collaborative report, led by Canada's dairy farmers, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS), and a sport leader advisory group, explores the status and challenges associated with girls' and women's participation and leadership in sport in Canada, and identifies actions to fuel lifelong participation.

Participation in any sport, from individual to team sport and from recreational to high performance, can contribute to healthy and active living. Girls and women who participate in sport realize significant physical, psychological and social benefits.

A review of academic work, industry reports, media data, National Sport Organizations's annual reports, sport stakeholder surveys and Census data, combined with a survey of Canadian female sport leaders (e.g., high-performance athletes, coaches, board members) clarified the major challenges that girls and women face in sport participation and leadership in Canada.

“There are old fashioned attitudes of established sports organizations that favour boys over girls, and perceptions of certain sports not being 'feminine'”

– Female Leader in Sport, survey respondent

RESULTS



SPORTS PARTICIPATION FROM GIRLS TO WOMEN

In Canada, 59% of girls (ages 3–17) participate in sport, with 22% participating in team sports.³ Alarming, as girls enter adolescence, their overall participation rate drops by 22%,³ and school sport participation drops by 26%.⁷ Girls are often discouraged from participating when they feel they lack competence or fundamental sport skills.

By 10 years of age,

if a girl has yet to participate in sports, there is only a 10% chance that she will be physically active as an adult.⁵

WOMEN AS LEADERS IN SPORT

Many Canadian females hold leadership positions across the sport world as administrators, executives, coaches, officials, volunteers and board members of sport organizations. The number of females holding coaching or officiating roles has gradually increased over time, but historically remain much lower than the participation rates of male coaches and officials.²

Women perceive less opportunities for coaching and training in sport compared to their male counterparts,¹⁶ and believe they need to adapt their behaviours to succeed.¹⁷ Previous findings suggest that even with more education, training and relative experience than men, women experience lower recognition of success and slower career progressions.^{18, 19}

PERSPECTIVE FROM FEMALE LEADERS IN SPORT

The survey of 657 female leaders, of which 61% had over 20 years' experience in sport, revealed eight themes of challenges to female sport participation and leadership:

1. **Predominant culture of sport (23.1%)**
2. **Financial implications (20.4%)**
3. **Access to sport on their terms (18.1%)**
4. **Alternate demands on time (14.3%)**
5. **Sharing the sport experience, i.e., limited female coaches & role models (11.6%)**
6. **Public perception (5.9%)**
7. **Peer/parental influence (3.8%)**
8. **The media (2.9%)**

THE EXPOSURE & ATTENTION FOR WOMEN'S SPORT

Women's sports receive lower levels of exposure relative to men's sports, but as concerning is the type of coverage that female athletes and events receive. The representation of women in sport in the media centres on femininity, thus trivializing female athletes rather than honouring athletic abilities.^{20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25}

In 2014, Canada's national sport television networks covered men's sport significantly more than women's. Of approximately 35,000 hours of sports programming, only 4% featured women's sports, with approximately 11% of the coverage devoted to sport that featured both genders. 32 Canadian national print media also dedicated only a small portion of total coverage to women's sport (5.1%).^{33, 34}

The lack of exposure of women's sport contributes to the absence of awareness about women's triumphs and a concerning lack of role models for aspiring young female athletes.



CLEARING THE HURDLES

Quite simply, from a sport participation point of view, we're nearing crisis mode.

And this is why Canada's dairy farmers, CAAWS and our advisory group have embarked on this research, aiming to identify the hurdles and, most importantly, provide a roadmap in the form of recommendations for future action.

The challenges girls and women face in sport participation are organized in three areas, distinct in the level of the challenge, stakeholders and regional responsibility.

Structural/Cultural Hurdles

- A predominate culture and history of sport that is male dominated
- Negative perceptions and stereotyping of girls and women in sport
- The quality and quantity of media coverage of women's sport
- The exposure of female sport via all sources of media

Individual Hurdles

- Competing demands on time ²
- Lack of interest in sport among girls and women ²
- Lack of parental and peer support and encouragement ^{4,8,9}
- Lack of financial resources ⁴

Sports Team, Organization & Community Hurdles

- Declining rates of girls and women participating in sports
- Limited female-specific sports and opportunities that meet the needs or interests of girls and women
- Limited access to coaching, training, equipment and facilities that embrace girls and women's specific abilities and skill levels
- Lack of opportunity to share the sport experience with positive female role models
- Lack of opportunity to celebrate female athletes and women's sport driven by low levels of quality media coverage

A ROADMAP FOR FUTURE ACTION

The identified hurdles must be addressed through multi-level, national and individual efforts, championed by organizations like CAAWS and Canada's dairy farmers.

SYSTEM-WIDE ACTION

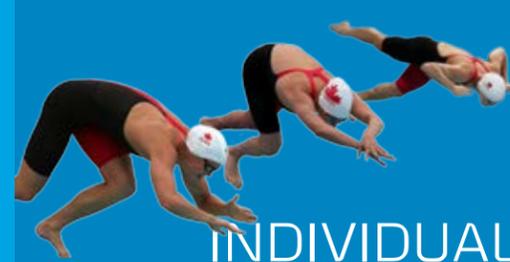
- Champion female elite athletes as spokespersons and ambassadors in corporate Canada
- Highlight and value more female athletes' achievements and sports by increasing the percentage of media content devoted to women's sport
- Create incentives for sport clubs/facilities to balance their allocations of time available for both boys' and girls' sports, and incentives for longer-term sponsorships, endorsements and/or funding of female sport
- Reassess government funding for sport participation to support women-specific sport programming targeted to underserved and high-need populations
- Establish a recognition platform to incentivize corporate Canada's support of women in sport with financial contributions, promotion and in-kind donations
- Encourage diversity in Board of Directors and other sport leadership roles, aiming for approximately 50/50 gender parity on boards and eliminating the "glass ceiling"
- Support women in transitions to coaching and officiating roles through female-specific training opportunities and inclusive interviewing processes



CLEARING THE HURDLES

SPORTS TEAM, ORGANIZATION & COMMUNITY ACTIONS

- Consult with girls and women to understand local realities that may hinder participation, and to develop programming that meets their needs, interests and experiences
- Provide training and mentorship opportunities for women to advance in leadership roles
- Educate organizations and communities to view diversity as an asset in the selection of coaches for representative teams and professional roles
- Enhance policy and programming to support quality coaching of female athletes by both women and men with attention to creating safe and inclusive spaces and reducing bullying
- Launch free and low-cost community female-only sport opportunities such as open houses or try-it days to expose diverse females to new sports in a safe and supportive environment
- Implement equitable rules for female and male sports (e.g., distances, duration, depth of field, prize money, etc.)
- Focus on fun, pleasure and challenge of participation, considering the age and abilities of participants



INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS

- Schedule time for sport, recognizing the importance of sport participation for physical, mental and social health
- Help build girls' confidence in sport by focusing on fundamental movement skills such as kicking, running, jumping, catching and throwing, before introducing fundamental sport-specific skills
- Prioritize financial resources to start and continue personal and family commitment to sport, taking advantage of free and low-cost community sport opportunities and national fitness tax credits
- Encourage girls to join and continue to play, coach and officiate a variety of sports from youth into adulthood
- Support elite female athletes by attending and watching events, and following athletes on social media
- Promote female sport news stories that focus on athletic skills, healthy living champions, accomplishments and profiles of positive role models
- Encourage the "next generation" of female enthusiasts by supporting a sport environment that is diverse, welcoming and fun



A MESSAGE FROM CANADA'S DAIRY FARMERS

Through our Fuelling Women Champions program, Canada's dairy farmers are committed to investing in the advancement of women and girls' sport for years to come.

In 2016 and beyond, Canada's dairy farmers will continue to financially support women's sports organizations across Canada. We take the findings of this report very seriously, and based on these findings, we will direct additional

efforts toward addressing some of these key priorities as identified by the authors, the advisory group and CAAWS so our collective efforts are most effectively targeting the greatest areas of opportunity for impact.

To learn more about how Canada's dairy farmers plan to **#ChampionHer**, and to download the full 35-page report, visit womenchampions.ca.



Follow [@WomenChampions](#) on Instagram & Twitter & visit [WomenChampions.ca](#) to learn more about how Canada's dairy farmers plan to **#ChampionHer**.

