

2025 Ontario Coaching Report – Overview

Key Takeaways

For Ontario athletes, parents, and coaches sport is a meaningful part of daily life, not just for the competition, but for the joy, connection, and support it brings. Ontarians want sport that is fun, values-driven, and guided by trusted coaches.

Sport Matters

6 in 10 athletes say playing their primary sport is the highlight of their day.

Sport is more than just physical activity; it is a meaningful part of daily life. It offers happiness, and a sense of purpose, especially when the environment supports development and belonging. When sport feels fun and fulfilling, athletes are more likely to stay engaged.

- When coached by a parent or guardian, the number of athletes that say playing their primary sport is the highlight of their day increases to 8 in 10.
- Only 4% of athletes say that sport is a negative experience.

Coaches Matter

1 in 2 athletes say their coach is the adult they trust most in their life (outside of their parents/guardians).

Coaches play a quiet but powerful role in people's lives. Beyond teaching skills, they build trust, offer support, and help athletes grow as individuals. A great coach can be a steady influence, helping athletes navigate challenges both on and off the field.

- 4 in 5 athletes say their coach is successful in building the sport culture they want.

What stands out about your coach? (Top 5 Answers)

- ✓ Encouraging and supportive
- ✓ Kind and friendly demeanor
- ✓ Makes the sport fun and enjoyable
- ✓ Provides useful instruction and skill development
- ✓ Fair and inclusive treatment of players

QUOTE: "I was having a really hard time with my mental health, and my coach would reach out even on our downtime days. He was always trying to make sure I was making good choices. Probably the best coach I've ever had...he is that way with all of us and it makes us feel valued as a person not just as a player."

Culture Matters

9 in 10 athletes and parents agree that sport culture is important.

The culture surrounding sport, including how teams treat each other, what values are emphasized, and how inclusive the environment feels, all shape the athlete experience. Across all backgrounds—age, race, ability, sexual orientation, income, and education—athletes, parents, and coaches share strong alignment on sport values and the importance of positive sport culture. It's not just about winning; it's about how the game is played and lived.

- There is near universal agreement among coaches, athletes, and parents on sport values and what makes a positive sport culture.
- Fun is the top reason athletes play sport, regardless of age, gender, or skill level.

Areas for Improvement

- 1. Coaches can know their athletes better.**
 - Coaches reported doing better on a wide range of interpersonal skills and connection building than athletes reported experiencing.
- 2. Hazing continues to happen, most often in school sports and with older athletes (age 13-24).**
 - Compared to coaches, athletes view hazing as more serious, have more negative views of hazing practices, and have more interest in positive team building activities.
- 3. As competition and age increases, both coaching and athlete behaviours drift away from the fun, inclusive values they say matter most.**
 - Athletes under the age of 12, and athletes in co-ed leagues of any age are more likely to experience behaviours that aligns with positive sport values compared to athletes age 12+ or those in gendered leagues.
- 4. Coach/parent relationships are challenging.**
 - While only a few parents engage in conflict creating behaviours, it is often disruptive and enough that almost all coaches experience them as part of their coaching role.
- 5. Parent and coach support for early specialization is not in athlete's best interests**
 - Half of all coaches, athletes, and parents believe it is appropriate to specialize in one sport before the age of 12, which is much earlier than the Long-Term Participant Development (LTPD) research recommends for most sports*.

**Long-Term Participant Development (LTPD): is a key framework in the Canadian sport system that promotes age-appropriate training, competition, and recovery to support lifelong engagement in sport. It discourages early specialization, emphasizing skill development and enjoyment across stages to reduce burnout and injury while fostering both recreational and elite pathways.*

Sport matters. Coaches matter. Culture matter.