



# 2025 Ontario Coaching Report

A 360-Degree View of Ontario Sport Culture  
Coaches, **Parents**, and **Athletes**



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The 2025 report gives a 360-degree view of Ontario sport culture by comparing the viewpoints of coaches, parents, and athletes.

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# About the Report

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

## 2025: Ontario Sport Culture 360

Building on our 2024 report on coaching values and behaviours, the 2025 edition expands the lens to include athletes and parents, offering a 360-degree view of Ontario's sport culture in practice. Guided by two key questions:

- How aligned are Ontario coaches, athletes, and parents with each other and the Canadian sport system?
- What does Ontario sport culture look like in 2025?

We explored coach values, behaviours, team initiation, and hazing, highlighting areas of alignment and divergence among stakeholders, as well as successes and challenges.

Our goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of coaching behaviours across sports and contexts, and to identify steps toward a more positive and inclusive sport experience.

## Understanding the Data

What do we mean when we say...

- **Athletes** ~ 6-24 years old, playing sport with a coach.
- **Parents** ~ Parents/guardians/legal caregivers of active athletes age 6-24 years old, playing sport with a coach, (who are not a coach themselves).
- **Sport** ~ Organized sport with a coach.

Different sport contexts:

- **Grassroots** ~ Recreational, Community Sport, House League, Intramural.
- **School sports** ~ Primary and Secondary school.
- **Development** ~ Competitive, Club, Rep, Travel, City, All-star, Provincial, National, and Post-secondary.

*\*For more information about the surveys and methodology see page 43.*

## A 360-Degree View of Ontario Sport Culture

This report compares responses from coaches, athletes, and parents, who answered the same (or similar) questions to provide a holistic view of Ontario's sport culture.

**1,000 Coaches** – 2024 Survey

**500 Athletes** – 2025 Survey

**500 Parents** – 2025 Survey



# 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.
- **Our Mission:** To develop coaches and sport leaders who create positive, inclusive and impactful sport experiences through advocacy, support, training and resources.
- **Our Vision:** Empowered Coaches, Strengthened Communities, Elevated Sport.

## Values

**Innovation**

**Connection**

**Quality**

**Adaptability**

**Equity**

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!**

# What Matters

**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.



**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.**



## 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**

## 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.

**Sport matters.**

**Coaches matter.**

**Culture matters.**

# What Needs to Change

Though Ontario sport culture is largely positive, several gaps worthy of exploration remain.

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 align 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):

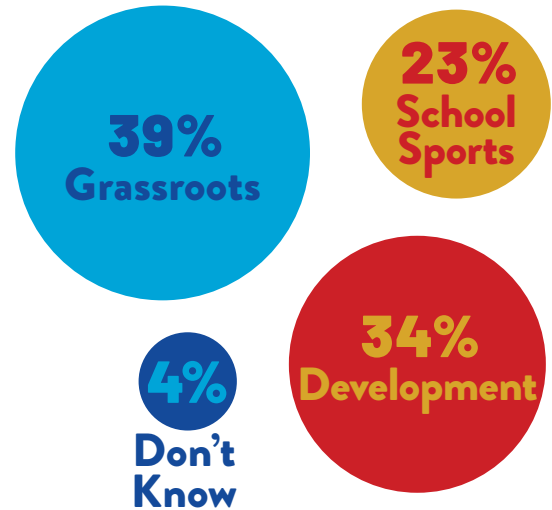
is a key framework in the Canadian sport system that promotes age-appropriate training, competition, and recovery to support lifelong engagement in sport. It discourages early specialization, emphasizing skill development and enjoyment across stages to reduce burnout and injury while fostering both recreational and elite pathways<sup>1</sup>.

# Ontario Sports By The Numbers

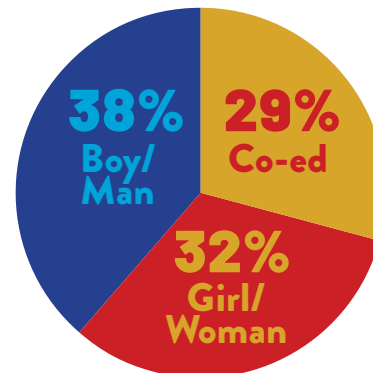
**Coaches, athletes, and parents participating in Ontario sport represent every age, race, ability, sexual orientation, income, and level of education.**

- 1 in 6 athletes are coached by a parent or caregiver, and 1 in 3 parents have coached a sport in the past.
- While 1 in 8 male athletes (13%) are coached by their dad, only 1 in 100 female athletes (1%) are coached by their mom.
- 6 in 10 athletes are coached within the primary coaching structure in Ontario, which is one head coach with assistant coaches. 1 in 3 athletes are coached by a single coach with no additional coaches.
- Less than half of parents (47%) are aware of the NCCP status of their child's coach.

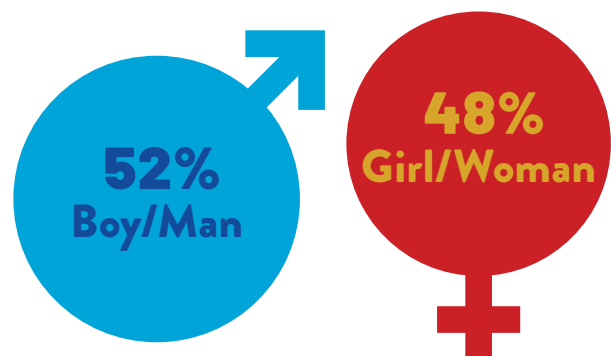
## Sport Context



## League Gender



## Athlete Gender\*



\*Less than 1% identified as Non-binary or Other.



# Values

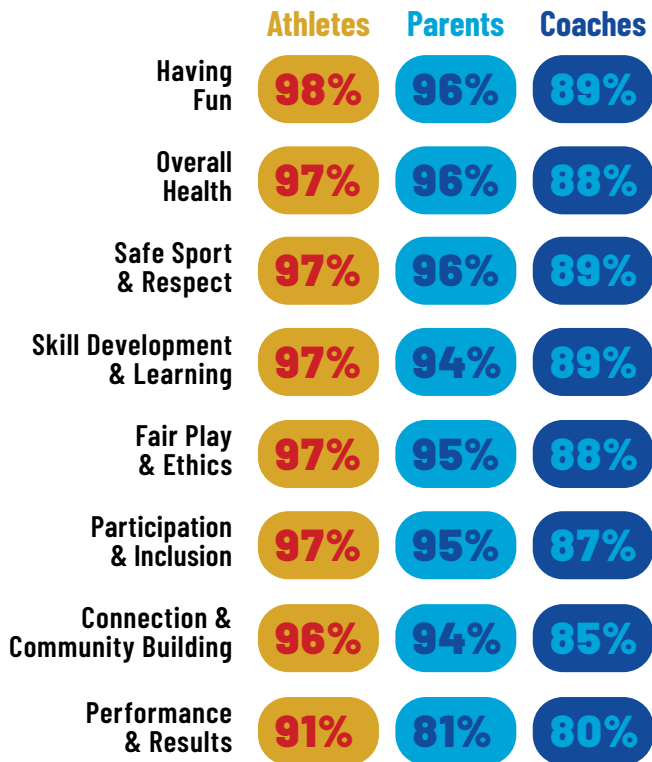
**BIG QUESTION: Do coaches, parents, and athletes share similar values about sports culture, and do these values align with the Canadian sport system?**

**FINDINGS:**  
**There is near universal agreement among coaches, athletes, and parents that sport culture is important, on sport values and what makes a positive sport culture.**

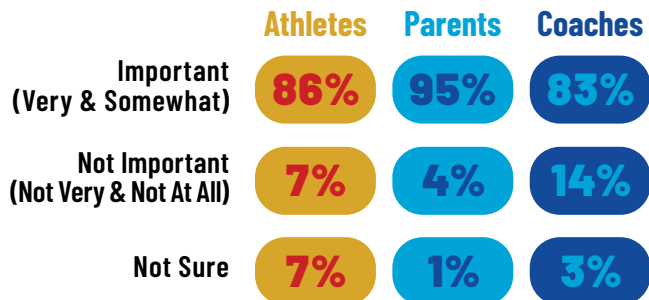
These ideals do not change as athletes age, competitiveness increases, or by gender. They are universal across all of sport, and for all sports. These values do align with the Canadian sport system.

- **Teamwork, Fair Play,** and **Respect** are the top values that make up a positive sport culture for both parents and coaches.
- Virtually all surveyed athletes and parents believe that **Having Fun, Overall Health, Safe Sport** and **Respect** are important to sport experience. A majority of coaches also say that each of these factors is important to their coaching.
- Athletes most commonly play sports to have fun, stay healthy, challenge themselves and to learn new skills.

## Importance of Positive Sport Values



## Importance of Sport Culture



## We all just want to have fun!

- To have fun playing is the number one reason athletes say they play sports. While this overall finding is not surprising, this stays true for every subgroup we looked at including:

- ✓ Boys, Girls, and Co-ed Leagues
- ✓ Grassroots, School, and Development sport contexts
- ✓ All ages (6-24)
- ✓ All equity groups

### What the research says:

Research confirms that fun is the primary driver of youth sport participation and, when absent, the leading reason for dropout.<sup>2</sup> The study explored what makes sports fun by mapping key themes like effort, learning, teamwork, coaching, and the overall sport environment from coach, parents, and athlete responses. The top-rated dimensions—Being a Good Sport, Trying Hard, and Positive Coaching—form the “Youth Sport Ethos,” emphasizing that fun is rooted in effort, encouragement, and fair play. These findings validate that across all demographics and sport contexts, fun remains the universal motivator for sustained engagement in sport.

## Top reasons athletes say they play sports





# Behaviours

## Coach Behaviours

**BIG QUESTION:**  
Are athletes and parents experiencing the same sport culture that coaches believe they are creating?

**FINDINGS:**  
Athletes and coach experiences sometimes align, but often do not, with communication and mental health support being two of the largest areas of divergence.

**Coaches are very aware of their negative behaviours**

- Athletes report experiencing negative behaviours from coaches (such as yelling, favouritism, or cheating) less often than coaches think they display them.
- However, about **1 in 5** athletes still say they experience some negative coaching behaviours.



Coach Behaviour	Athlete Experience with their Coach (Often/Always)	Coach Self-Reported Behaviour (Often/Always)	Difference	Related Value
Respect the official's decision (e.g., a referee)	75%	63%	12%	Fair Play & Ethics
Tell you that winning is very important	24%	45%	21%	Performance & Results
Spend more time coaching the athletes who are already really good	22%	37%	15%	Participation & Inclusion
Have a private one-on-one meeting with you (just you two, without anyone else there)	17%	35%	18%	Safe Sport & Respect
Let you (or a teammate) go back to playing earlier than planned after an injury, because you said you feel better*	14%	32%	18%	Athlete Health (Physical & Mental)
Yell when they're mad/frustrated or disappointed/upset	13%	22%	9%	Athlete Health (Physical & Mental)
Trash-talk or insult the opposing team/opponent	6%	21%	15%	Fair Play & Ethics
Bend or break league rules*	3%	19%	16%	Fair Play & Ethics

\*These marked survey questions were a yes/no choice "Please tell us whether your child's coach ever does the following". The other questions in this section were rated on a scale of Always, Often, Sometimes, Never. Afterwards, Always/Often responses were combined.

## Understanding the Behaviours Data

Agreement on a behaviour's frequency is not necessarily a positive. For example, both coaches and athletes could be in complete agreement about how often a coach yells at officials, a behaviour that would ideally be rare.

Athlete and parent perceptions of coach behaviours are in almost universal agreement (within a few percentage points of each other) and so for many charts only athlete data is shown.

\*For a deeper dive into coach behaviours see our 2024 Ontario Coaching Report<sup>8</sup>

# Coach & Athlete Alignment

**Athletes and coaches reported a similar frequency of these coaching behaviours.**

Coach Behaviour	Athlete Experience with their Coach (Often/Always)	Coach Self-Reported Behaviour (Often/Always)	Related Value
Focus more on helping you improve instead of just focusing on winning	77%	77%	Performance & Results
Shows you how a skill should be done	75%	76%	Skill Development & Learning
Explains why a skill or drill matters, not just how to do it	68%	77%	Skill Development & Learning
Give you high-fives, fist bumps, or shake your hand, when it's not about a game or competition*	66%	69%	Fun
Celebrating something you've done well in front of others	66%	73%	Fair Play & Ethics
Make you do things like run or do exercises when you don't play well	26%	29%	Safe Sport & Respect

\*These marked survey questions were a yes/no choice: "Please tell us whether your child's coach ever does the following". The other questions in this section were rated on a scale of Always, Often, Sometimes, Never. Afterwards, Always/Often responses were combined.



**My coach always encourages us and wants to make practice fun. They are competitive but are encouraging too.**



## Coaches overestimate how well they are connecting with their athletes.

- The majority of coaches believe they have strong interpersonal skills, and are regularly communicating and supporting their athletes on and off the field; however, athletes' responses in 2025 suggest a discrepancy of up to 45%.
- These discrepancies come up most often with behaviours related to **Participation & Inclusion** and **Fun**.
- Coaches believe they add fun to practices more often than athletes reported experiencing.

## 5 largest gaps between coach and athlete experience



of coaches say they learn about athletes' cultural backgrounds often/always,



of athletes surveyed say their coach has ever done this.



of coaches say they ask athletes what names and pronouns they prefer,



of athletes report experiencing this.



of coaches say they will admit to their athletes when they are wrong or make a mistake,



of athletes report experiencing this.



of coaches say they ask for feedback from athletes about their coaching,



of athletes report experiencing this.



of coaches say they talk to athletes about mental health and share tools for helping them to feel their best



of athletes report experiencing this.

Coach Behaviour	Athlete Experience with their Coach (Often/Always)	Coach Self-Reported Behaviour (Often/Always)	Difference	Related Value
Clearly thinks about how to make a practice fun when planning it	62%	73%	-11%	Fun
Talk to you about their goals for the season	60%	72%	-12%	Connection & Community Building
Talks through how a skill should be done*	59%	73%	-14%	Skill Development & Learning
Encourage you to join in team cheers*	54%	66%	-12%	Fun
Help you set individual goals for your own progress, not just the team's*	42%	63%	-21%	Performance & Results
Get down to your level (they may have to crouch or get on a knee) to talk to you face-to-face	42%	65%	-23%	Participation & Inclusion
Ask how you're doing after you share something hard going on in your life (e.g., changing schools, or family changes)	39%	64%	-25%	Athlete Health (Physical & Mental)
Ask what you'd like to work on or learn at practice*	39%	64%	-25%	Fun
Keep track of how you're doing with the goals you set for your own progress*	36%	63%	-27%	Performance & Results
Admit when they are wrong or when they make a mistake*	34%	75%	-41%	Safe Sport & Respect
Ask you how you feel about their coaching and if you have any ideas to help them improve*	24%	58%	-34%	Connection & Community Building
Talk to you about mental health and share ideas and ways that can help you feel your best*	19%	53%	-34%	Athlete Health (Physical & Mental)
Give you a time out or make you leave practice if you are not following direction	17%	37%	-20%	Safe Sport & Respect
Learn about your culture and background*	17%	63%	-46%	Participation & Inclusion
Ask you what names and pronouns you would like them to use*	14%	59%	-45%	Participation & Inclusion

\*These marked survey questions were a yes/no choice: "Please tell us whether your child's coach ever does the following". The other questions in this section were rated on a scale of Always, Often, Sometimes, Never. Afterwards, Always/Often responses were combined.

# Athlete Behaviour

## FINDINGS: Overall, most athletes refrain from negative, hurtful, or unfair conduct.

- Less than **1 in 10** athletes reported they often trash talk, complain, or break rules, which aligns with parent data. This is notably less than coaches reported experiencing.
- However, a larger group of athletes (1 in 3) say they do sometimes engage in these behaviour
- Although there is a discrepancy between athlete and coach experiences, it should be noted that both reported most athletes usually behave in positive ways.

Athlete Behaviour	Athlete Self Report (Often/Always)	Coaches' Perspective (Majority of Athletes)*
Tell your coach how much you want to win or achieve a specific result	32%	50%
Trash talk (say rude things) to an opposing athlete or team	8%	32%
Criticize/complain about the officials during a game	7%	32%
Criticize/complain about the play of other players on your team during a game	6%	29%
Bend or break rules during a game	4%	23%

\*The coach data here represents coaches who reported 50% or more of their athletes did the following often.



# Parent Behaviours

## FINDINGS: Overall coaches are more critical of parent behaviour than parents are of themselves.

- Coaches reported higher rates of negative behaviours by parents (such as trash talking, criticism, and coach-parent conflict) than parents self-reported.
- 8 in 10 parents say they have no conflict with the coach, compared to 1 in 2 coaches saying the same.
- **3 in 4** parents surveyed note watching/attending their child's game often; many regularly attend practices too.
- **Parents with previous coaching experience are more likely to engage in "coaching from the stands" behaviours** such as providing coaching tips, telling the coach what they don't like about their coaching, and critiquing the play of other players.
  - ◆ Parents with coaching experience are 2x as likely to help with team activities compared to parents who have never coached.

## Primary areas of conflict between coaches & parents:



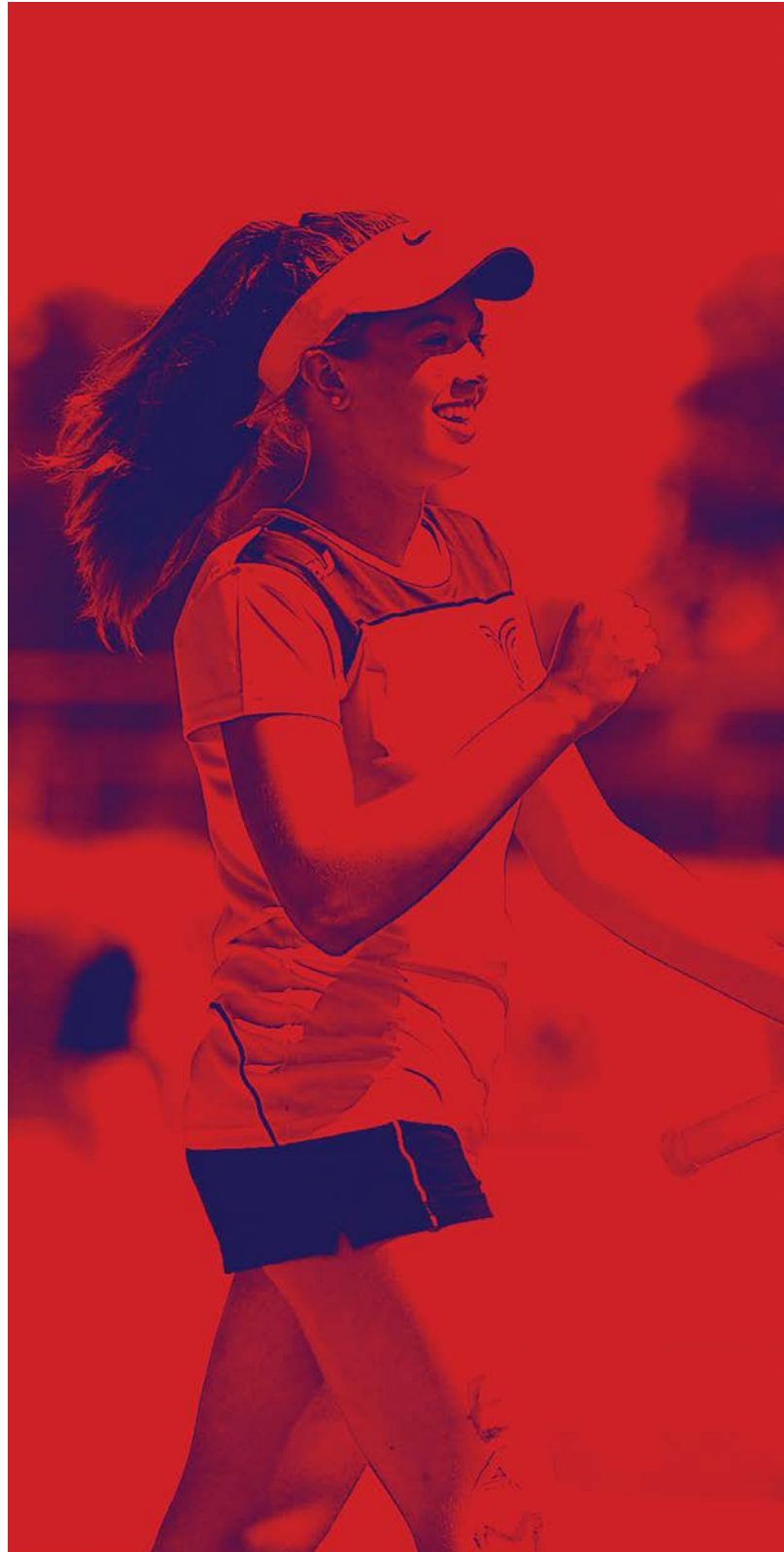
**The data suggests while only a few parents engage in disruptive or conflict creating behaviours often, it is enough that almost all coaches experience them as part of their coaching role.**

One possible explanation for the difference in reported experiences when it comes to parent behaviours is the parent to coach ratio. If just 10% of parents engage in disruptive behaviour (as our data suggests), then on an average youth sports team with 20+ parents at least two will be engaging in these behaviours often. Thus, it is almost impossible for a coach to escape these conflicts.

**Reminder: 9 in 10 parents reported they act in ways that reflect the positive sport values.**

Parent Behaviours	Parent Self-Report (at least 50% of the time)	Coach perspective*
Watch/attend your child's practice	74%	54%
Provide your child coaching tips	33%	47%
Express to your child's coach the importance of winning or results	14%	42%
After an injury, ask the coach for your child to return to play earlier than originally planned if they feel better	11%	31%
Critique the play of other players on your child's team during a game	11%	27%
Ask your child's coach to bend league rules or guidelines	8%	25%
Criticize the officials during a game	7%	22%
Trash talk an opposing athlete or team	7%	29%

*\*The coach data here represents coaches who reported 50% or more of their parents did the following often/always.*



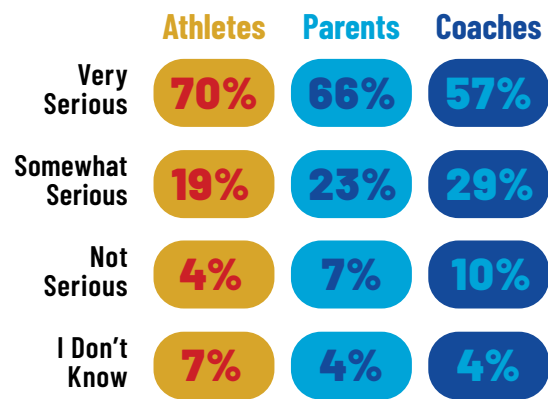


# Hazing, Initiation, and Team Building

**FINDINGS:** Hazing happens most often in schools, amongst older athletes, and increases with athlete age. The majority of athletes, parents, and coaches recognize hazing in sports as a problem, but they disagree on what behaviours constitute it and when to intervene.

- **9 in 10 athletes, parents, and coaches believe that sport hazing is a problem.** However, there is disagreement from them about what behaviours qualify as hazing.
- **Athletes view hazing as a more serious problem, have more negative views of hazing practices, and have more interest in positive team building activities compared to coaches.**

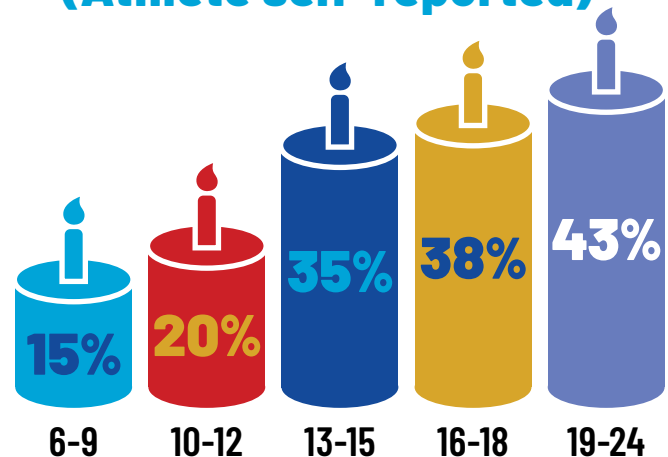
## How Serious is Hazing?



## Hazing rates increase as athletes age

- **1 in 7** athletes experiences hazing when age 6-9, and this grows to nearly **1 in 2** by age 19-24.

## Hazing rates by athlete age (Athlete self-reported)\*



\*Engaged in at some point over the last 2 years

## Hazing is more likely to take place in school sport settings.

- School sport athletes experience the highest rates of all hazing practices with 43% experiencing some form of hazing, compared to 32% for development athletes, and 19% for grassroots.
- Athletes in school sport are **3x** as likely to experience **extreme hazing** compared to grassroots or competitive sport (16% vs 5% vs 5%).
- ◆ **1 in 6 school athletes experience extreme hazing** (compared to 1 in 20 for grassroots or development sport).

### Hazing as a practice is passed from one generation to the next.

Younger coaches (18-34) compared to older coaches (55+) were at least:

- **4x** as likely to hold positive views of hazing practices
- **2x** as likely to report hazing happening on their team
- **20%** less likely to say the Positive Sport Values were important to their coaching

### There is a correlation between teams with hazing practices and negative coaching behaviours.

Athletes who have experienced hazing are more likely to note their coaches yell when they're mad, spend time coaching athletes who are already good, and trash talk the opposing team.

## Athlete engaged in at least 1 behaviour in last 2 years

Hazing Frequency (self-reported)	Overall	School	Development	Grassroots
Team Building	57%	53%	77%	46%
Hazing	28%	39%	30%	19%
Extreme Hazing	7%	16%	5%	5%

## Athletes would value more positive team building activities.

- **9 in 10** athletes and parents view positive team building behaviours favorably (team meal, outing, etc.), more than the 8 in 10 coaches who do the same.
- Only **6 in 10** athletes said they participated in a positive team building activity in the last two years.

## Positive Views of Team Building Behaviour

Team Building Behaviours	Athletes	Parents	Coaches
Team meal	90%	91%	92%
Active team outing	89%	90%	78%
Movie night	88%	89%	77%
Attend a sports game together	88%	91%	80%

## Team Building Behaviours Experienced in Last 2 Years





## Athletes universally do not like hazing practices.

- Less than **1 in 25** athletes have a positive view of most extreme hazing behaviours.
- Most athletes do not have positive views of **any** hazing behaviours.

### Holds Positive View of Hazing Behaviour

	Athletes	Parents	Coaches
Physical tests	29%	26%	42%
Forced singing or chanting in public	15%	13%	26%
New members required to do things for senior members	13%	15%	26%
Wearing embarrassing clothing	7%	7%	19%
Mean nicknames	3%	4%	19%
Being yelled, screamed, or cursed at by others	3%	3%	15%

### Holds Positive View of Extreme Hazing Behaviour

	Athletes	Parents	Coaches
Take team member somewhere / Pretend abduction of team member	4%	2%	18%
Being made to drink or eat something gross	4%	4%	18%
Not being allowed to sleep, eat, or drink water	3%	3%	18%
Damaging equipment or buildings on purpose	3%	3%	15%
Pressure to consume alcohol or drugs	2%	2%	16%
Getting physical or fighting / Physical and/or sexual assault	1%	1%	16%

\*Coaches and athletes under the age of 13 received slightly different wording for several practices. See chart on page 42.

## Every hazing practice we asked about is happening with some frequency in Ontario.

- While rates for most hazing practices are less than 10%, this only represents hazing experienced by athletes in the last two years. Over their sporting lifetime athletes experience many forms of hazing, as demonstrated by the data from parents and coaches presented in the chart on the following page 24.
- **Parents don't always know when their child experiences hazing.** Athletes self-report higher rates of hazing than parents report their children experience.





## Hazing Behaviours - Engaged in Last 2 Years

	Athletes	Parents	Coaches
Physical tests	16%	13%	14%
Forced singing or chanting in public	4%	3%	6%
New members required to do things for senior members	6%	4%	9%
Wearing embarrassing clothing	3%	2%	7%
Mean nicknames	7%	3%	8%
Being yelled, screamed, or cursed at by others	6%	5%	9%

## Extreme Hazing Behaviours - Engaged in Last 2 Years

	Athletes	Parents	Coaches
Take team member somewhere / Pretend abduction of team member	2%	0%	4%
Being made to drink or eat something gross	2%	1%	3%
Not being allowed to sleep, eat, or drink water	<1%	1%	5%
Damaging equipment or buildings on purpose	1%	1%	3%
Pressure to consume alcohol or drugs	4%	1%	5%
Getting physical or fighting / Physical and/or sexual assault	1%	1%	4%

\*Coaches and athletes under the age of 13 received slightly different wording for several practices. See chart on page 44.

## Behaviours parents and coaches experienced as an athlete over their lifetime

	Parents*	Coaches
Team meal	39%	35%
Active team outing	27%	24%
Physical tests	22%	27%
New members required to do things for senior members	17%	15%
Wearing embarrassing clothing	8%	9%
Mean nicknames	16%	17%
Being yelled, screamed, or cursed at by others	21%	21%
Not being allowed to sleep, eat, or drink water	3%	7%
Damaging equipment or buildings on purpose	3%	5%
Pressure to consume alcohol or drugs	8%	8%
Getting physical or fighting / Physical and/or sexual assault	3%	5%

\*Only including parents who played organized sports as a child.



## Policy and Enforcement

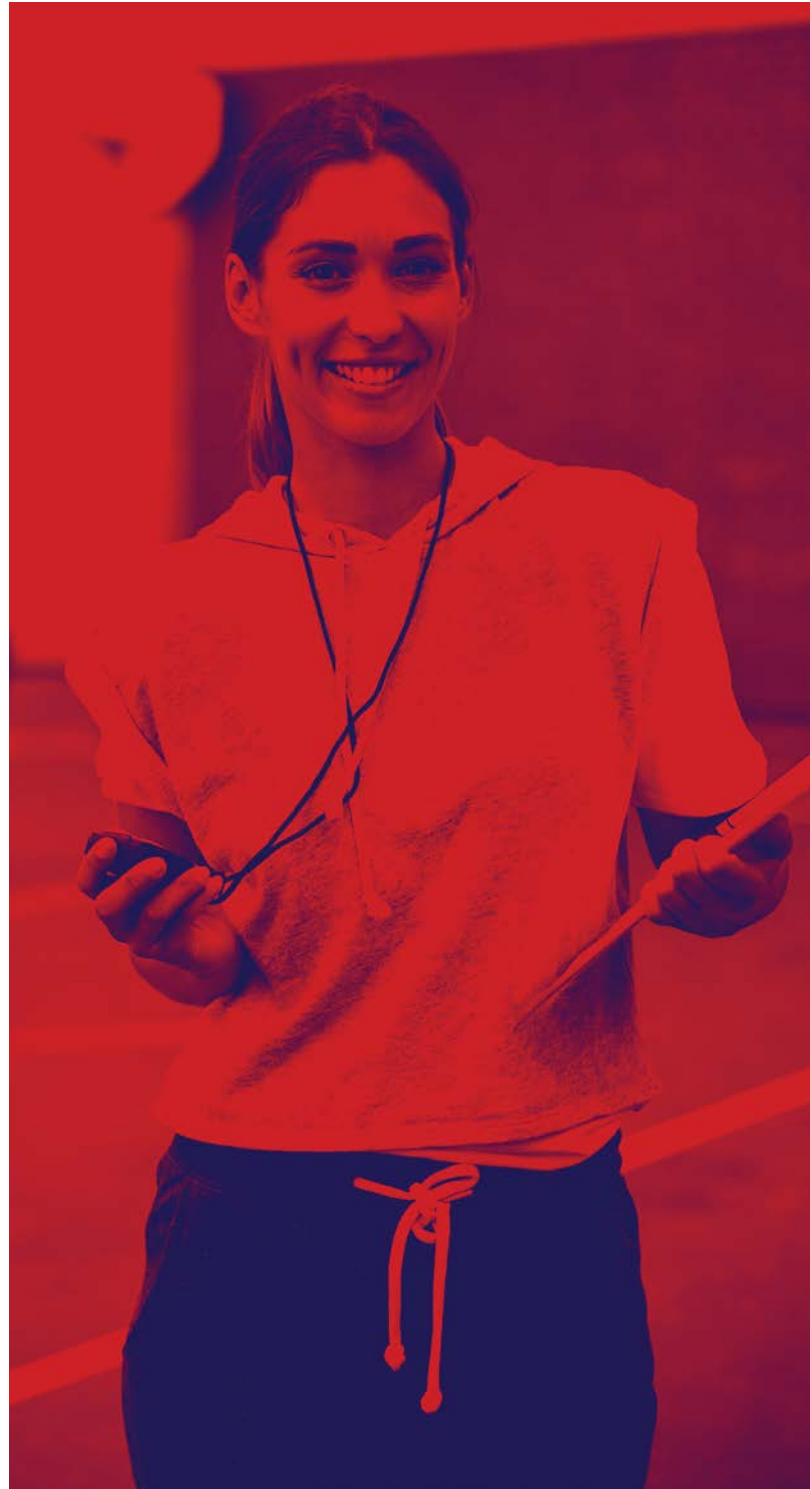
- While **2 in 5** coaches say they intervene to stop hazing practices every time, only **1 in 5** athletes say coaches do so.
- Less than **1 in 10** athletes say their coach gives consequences for hazing, though **4 in 10** coaches believe they do.
- Half of parents (55%) do not know if their club has a hazing policy.

### Does your child's club/school have a hazing policy?



### Organizational Hazing Prevention

	Athletes	Coaches
My coach tells us what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable at the start of the season	37%	45%
My coach steps in to stop hazing when they see it happening every time	21%	43%
My coach steps in and gives consequences after the hazing has happened	7%	40%





# Sport Culture by Age & Context

**FINDINGS: While coach, athlete, and parent values stay largely constant across athlete age and sport context, behaviours of those in sport change as athletes age, and competition increases.**

**Athletes under the age of 12 and athletes in co-ed leagues of any age, are more likely to experience behaviours that align with positive sport values compared to athletes age 12-24, or athletes in gender separated leagues.**

While drawing a direct connection is beyond the scope of this report's data, it is well known that as youth age their participation in sport also declines<sup>7</sup>. It raises a question about whether there is a connection between the changes in sports behaviours as athletes age, the increase in competitiveness, gender separated leagues, and the decline in sports participation?

## **Fun vs. Winning as Athlete's Age**

- Athletes aged 6-12 are **5x** more likely to say their coach notably makes the sport fun and enjoyable compared to athletes 19-24 (19% vs. 4%)
- Athletes aged 19-24 and those in male leagues are more likely to tell their coach how much they want to win or bend/ break rules during a game
- Older athletes are more likely to report their coach emphasize winning and uses exercise as punishment when they don't play well (compared to younger athletes).

Data indicates behaviours in sport changes as athletes age, become more competitive, and leagues separate by gender. As this happens those involved in sport (coaches, athletes, parents) start to act in ways that are less reflective of the positive sport values they hold.

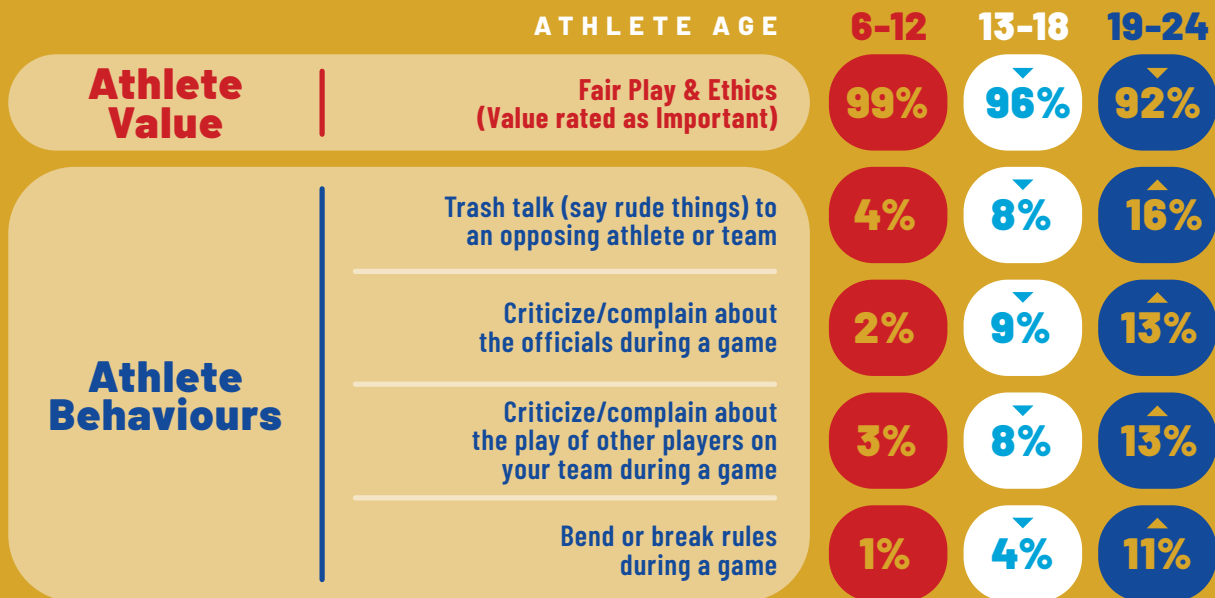
## **Previous research supports our findings:**

*As youth move into adolescence and into more competitive and gender separated leagues, social norms, performance pressures, and hierarchical team structures make it more likely that coaches, athletes, and parents resort to controlling coaching<sup>3</sup>, tactical aggression including trash-talk<sup>4</sup>, hazing rituals<sup>5</sup>, and parental pressure behaviours<sup>6</sup>. These are patterns that can undermine previously held positive sport values like respect, safety, and athlete-centred development.*

## COMPARISON: Athlete Values and Coach Behaviours



## COMPARISON: Athlete Values and Athlete Behaviours



## Co-Ed vs Gender Separated Sport

Compared to co-ed leagues, coaches from gender separated leagues (boy/man, girl/woman) are:

**2x**  
as likely to

- use exercise as punishment
- trash-talk or insult the opposing team/opponent

**3x**  
as likely to

- tell athletes winning is very important
- spend more time coaching the better athletes
- yell when mad or frustrated

- Athletes in gender separated leagues are **2x** as likely to experience hazing compared to co-ed leagues

- Athletes in boy's/men's leagues are **8x** more likely to say they **bend or break rules during a game** compared to athletes in co-ed leagues



# Sport Specialization & High-Performance Potential

**FINDINGS: 3 in 10 parents believe their child has the potential to become a high-performance, scholarship, or “pro” athlete. These parents overwhelmingly think this belief positively impacts their child’s sport experience.**

- **1 in 2** coaches, athletes, and parents believe it is appropriate to specialize in one sport before the age of 12, with **1 in 4** believing specialization should take place by the age of 9. Both age ranges are much earlier than the LTPD recommends for most sports.
- Only **1 in 5** parents and athletes are familiar with LTPD.
- Sport specialization—when children focus on a single sport at the exclusion of others, often with intensive training and competition—carries some risks when it happens too early (before 13). While nearly all surveyed athletes and parents highlighted having fun, staying healthy, and safe sport and respect for their importance to sport culture, early sport specialization is often detrimental to exploration and fun with different sports, activity levels, physical and mental health, and athlete success.

## Sport Specialization:

Sport specialization is a training method now commonly used by young athletes who hope to achieve elite-level success. This may be defined as:

1. choosing a main sport,
2. quitting all other sports to focus on one sport, and
3. year-round training [greater than 8 months per year].<sup>8</sup>

### Performance Advantage of Multisport:

NBA players who had participated in multiple sports during high school demonstrated an ability to withstand higher workloads while having fewer games missed due to injury, when compared with players who had only played basketball. Furthermore, athletes who delayed sport specialization had greater statistical and award success in their professional careers (appeared in 19% more pro games, 2x as likely to earn awards) than those who focused on early single-sport specialization.<sup>9</sup>

## Harm Potential

### Physical Harms

- **Increased injury risk:** Repetitive stress on growing bones, muscles, and joints can cause overuse injuries (e.g., stress fractures, tendonitis, growth plate injuries). Overuse injuries account for roughly 50% of all youth sports injuries, especially among early specialists.<sup>10</sup> Further, highly specialized youth show 59% greater odds of any injury and 45% greater odds of overuse injury compared to low specialists.<sup>11</sup> Overuse injuries pose long-term risks, as youth can develop chronic pain or lingering musculoskeletal issues that impact performance, growth, and willingness to continue in sport.
- **Loss of intrinsic motivation:** The sport may feel like a “job” instead of play, reducing enjoyment and long-term participation.<sup>13</sup>

### Developmental Harms

- **Missed foundational skills:** Kids who don't sample multiple sports may miss chances to develop a wide range of physical literacy (e.g., agility, balance, endurance) which is essential to neuromuscular control and injury prevention.<sup>14</sup>
- **Early high performance ≠ long-term success:** Early specialization does not guarantee elite performance; in fact, many top athletes (including Olympians) developed their skills through multiple sports before specializing.<sup>15</sup> Studies have linked later specialization to improved performance across many sports.<sup>15</sup>

### Psychological Harms

- **Burnout and dropout:** Early specialization is strongly linked to athletes quitting sports altogether due to exhaustion, pressure, or loss of enjoyment. An estimated 70% of youth athletes quit organized sports by age 13, often due to burnout.<sup>10</sup>
- **Increased stress and anxiety:** High expectations from coaches, parents, or self can create performance pressure at a very young age that children are not equipped to manage; these stressors can lead to wellbeing and long-term activity challenges.<sup>12</sup>



## Sector Familiarity

- **Athletes and parents have significantly less familiarity with core sport system organizations and principles compared to coaches.**

For example, **1 in 2** coaches are familiar with the LTPD, Rule of Two, and UCCMS, compared to **1 in 5** for athletes and parents.

- **However, 1 in 2 athletes and parents are familiar with Safe Sport.**

## Familiarity with the sport system

	Athletes	Parents	Coaches
Kids Help Phone	59%	69%	NA
Safe Sport	48%	44%	67%
NCCP (National Coaching Certification Program)	NA	36%	62%
Provincial Sport Body	NA	27%	61%
Coaches Association of Ontario	NA	41%	58%
Rule of Two	17%	19%	53%
Rowan's Law	29%	28%	52%
(UCCMS) The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport	20%	18%	50%
Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD)/ Long Term Participant Development (LTPD)	20%	19%	48%

# Recommendations – Coaches

## What's Going Well?

- Coaches play extremely important roles for their athletes as trusted role models, confidants, and advisors both in sport and in life. Coaches are significant drivers of creating a positive sport culture, and they do better than they think when it comes to reducing the negative coaching behaviours explored in this report!

## Areas for improvement:

- Communication, team building & hazing prevention, and value alignment.

## **ACTION 1: Emphasize and enhance 1:1 relationship building with your athletes.**

When athletes feel supported, capable, and validated, they perform better and feel safer. While still abiding by The Rule of Two, the following suggestions can be incorporated to enhance coach-athlete connections:

- 1. Emphasize Relationship Buildings and Individual Check-Ins:** Spend 1–2 minutes with each athlete during warm-up or cooldown to ask about school, hobbies, or how they're feeling (shows care beyond just sport/performance).

- ♦ E.g. Asking athletes “From 1-10, how's your energy/mood today?” can show that you care AND help to normalize conversations about mental health and emotional awareness.

- 2. Shared Goal Setting:** Collaboratively set personal and athletic goals with athletes, as participation in goal setting fosters more responsibility and commitment.

- 3. Create Athlete Input Opportunities:** Ask athletes to help design parts of practice (e.g., “What drill do you think we need more of this week?”).

- 4. Model Vulnerability:** Share your own coping strategies (“I was stressed before our game too, here's how I calmed myself”).

### What Does the Research Say?

A better perceived coach-athlete relationship directly improves athletic behaviours, especially the closeness/emotional bond between coach and athlete.<sup>16</sup> These strong relationships emphasizing care, choice, and voice reduce stress hormones and buffer burnout<sup>17</sup> while also heightening motivation and decreasing anxiety.<sup>18</sup>



## **ACTION 2: Promote team building and reduce opportunities for hazing to take place by prioritizing personal education on hazing behaviours, intervention, and discipline.**

- 1. Set Clear Expectations from Day One:** Establish a **zero-tolerance hazing policy** and outline what hazing looks like, especially in relation to team bonding.
- 2. Replace any “Initiation” with inclusive team-building traditions.**
- 3. Educate Athletes and Parents:** Hold preseason meetings explaining the dangers of hazing and share anonymous reporting options.

**4. Encourage Athlete Voice:** Empower captains and leaders to promote positive bonding activities. Create regular check-ins where younger athletes can share concerns safely.

**5. Model Respect and Inclusivity:** Coaches who consistently demonstrate care, fairness, and empathy foster a climate where hazing is less likely.

### **What Does the Research Say?**

Coaches play a critical prevention and intervention role, both by shaping culture and by responding effectively when incidents occur. Athletes often fail to recognize hazing because of cultural normalization; as such, coaches are an important safeguard against hazing.<sup>19</sup> Coaches who intervene early reduce normalization of hazing and are viewed by athletes as protective leaders rather than bystanders.<sup>20</sup>

## **ACTION 3: Reflect on values of a positive sport culture and how they align with your personal coaching values.**

Different reflective exercises can help clarify coaching values and ensure coaches are intentional about the sport culture being created. The following exercises can be used based on the goals of reflection:

### **1. Clarifying My Coaching Values:<sup>21,22</sup>**

- ◆ What three values are most important to me as a coach?
- ◆ Why do I hold these values? (personal experiences, mentors, philosophy)
- ◆ How do these values show up in my everyday coaching behaviours?

### **2. Comparing with Positive Sport Culture Values:**

- ◆ Do my values align with the cultural values: of my club, my sport, and the broader sport sector?
- ◆ Where do I see strong alignment?
- ◆ Where do I notice gaps or contradictions?

### **3. Reflection on Practice:<sup>23</sup>** Think about a recent practice or competition:

- ◆ What did I do that supported my values and positive sport culture?
- ◆ What did I do that may have contradicted them (e.g., frustration, negative comments)?
- ◆ How might athletes have perceived my actions?

### **4. Action Planning:<sup>24</sup>**

- ◆ One behaviour I want to continue because it reflects my values is:
- ◆ One behaviour I want to reduce or eliminate because it contradicts my values is:
- ◆ One new behaviour I will try to better align with positive sport culture is:

#### **What Does the Research Say?**

When coaches' behaviours align with positive sport culture, athletes experience greater motivation, confidence, and well-being, as well as decreased dropout.<sup>25</sup> Coaches who lack reflective practice can perpetuate negative cultures, while reflective coaches can disrupt them.<sup>26</sup> Coaches who model alignment between values and behaviour set the tone for the team, reducing normalization of hazing, abuse, or disrespect.

# Recommendations – Athletes

## What’s Going Well?

- Athletes are important contributors and have more power to influence sport culture than they think. Athletes are clear on what makes up a positive sport culture, with almost all athletes reporting that having fun, overall health, and safe sport and respect are foundational to the sport experience. Further, most athletes avoid negative, hurtful, or unfair conduct, which helps foster an environment where everyone can enjoy sport.

## Recommendations:

- Play multiple sports, especially as a young athlete, stay informed about hazing and disclose when necessary.

## **ACTION 1: Stay informed about how to identify hazing and disclose to trusted support systems.**

### **1. Pay attention to the signs that hazing may be occurring on your team. Athletes should look for:**

- ◆ Humiliation disguised as bonding → forced dress-ups, pranks, social media shaming.
- ◆ Risk or harm → physical pain, alcohol/substance use, dangerous stunts.
- ◆ Exclusionary practices → rookies singled out or controlled by veterans.
- ◆ Secrecy → events that athletes are pressured not to discuss.

**Practical tip:** Ask yourself: “If this activity were recorded and shown to my parents, teachers, or a younger sibling—would it still feel like team bonding, or would it feel wrong?”

### **2. Take steps to safely intervene if you witness hazing on your team:**

- ◆ Name the behaviour – Calmly identify it: “This feels like hazing. It’s not okay.”
- ◆ Support the target – Stand with or remove the teammate being hazed; offer reassurance privately later.
- ◆ Recruit allies – Discuss your concerns with other trusted athletes/athlete-leaders on your team.
- ◆ Report – Use anonymous reporting tools or talk to a trusted adult (coach, parent, school staff).

**Practical tip:** Use “I statements” to reduce confrontation: “I don’t feel comfortable with this,” or “I don’t think this helps our team.”

### **What Does the Research Say?**

Peer culture and team norms often drive hazing, so empowering athletes with tools to recognize, intervene, and prevent hazing is essential. Athletes who experience hazing report lower team cohesion and trust, contrary to the myth that hazing builds unity.<sup>27</sup> Hazing persists largely due to bystander silence; bystander intervention models show that when athletes label hazing clearly and intervene collectively, it shifts peer norms.<sup>28</sup>

## **ACTION 2: Avoid early sport specialization by exploring different sports and activity types (sport sampling), especially before 13 years old.**

There's nothing wrong with believing in your potential to become an elite-level athlete! However, despite common beliefs that focusing on one sport is the answer, your potential is much more likely to grow into actual elite-level success if you participate in a variety of sports and activity types to diversify your skills and build your physical resilience. As such, delaying sport specialization until at least 13, or even longer if possible, and staying curious about exploring and sampling sports is recommended.

### **What Does the Research Say?**

Early sport specialization can harm an athlete's physical and mental health, social development, and progress. See page 28 for more on the risks.

Sport sampling, or exploring various sports, is linked to a higher chance of becoming an elite athlete, long-term involvement, and improved physical literacy. A study showed German athletes who trained later and participated in multiple sports were more likely to reach international levels.<sup>29</sup> NBA players who played multiple sports in high school handled higher workloads, had fewer injuries, played 19% more professional games, and were twice as likely to earn awards compared to early specializers.<sup>9</sup> Sampling sports also helps develop fundamental movement skills essential for lifelong activity and versatility, leading to better neuromuscular control and lower injury risk.<sup>14</sup>





# Recommendations – Parents

## What’s Going Well?

- Parents/guardians are key contributors to a positive sport culture, despite not typically being involved in the on-field/on-court aspects of their child’s sport. 9 in 10 parents/guardians reinforce and reflect positive sport values through their behaviour on the sidelines and their interactions with their child’s coach. Parents/guardians overwhelmingly attend their child’s games and practices, highlighting their care and involvement.

A culture of empathy and mutual appreciation builds trust, increasing parents’ confidence in coaches and vice versa.<sup>30</sup> While it’s important for coaches to acknowledge the investment of time, money, and emotion on the parent end, it’s also important for parents to recognize the coach’s expertise, planning demands, and workload. Using empathy-driven phrasing to begin conversations can greatly help in reducing conflict (e.g., “I see how much effort you put into leading the team...”).

## Areas for Improvement:

- Parent/coach communication, over-emphasizing winning and encouraging early sport specialization.

**ACTION 1: Be intentional about your relationship with your child’s coach(es), especially when navigating conflict.**

### What Does the Research Say?

Research shows that when parents and coaches build collaborative relationships, athletes experience better outcomes in terms of performance, motivation, and mental health—whereas conflict between the two can harm athlete well-being.<sup>31</sup>

## **ACTION 2: Avoid sport specialization for your child before the age of 13.**

Before age 13, children benefit most from a variety of sports and unstructured play, which builds stronger bodies, broader skills, and healthier lifelong engagement in physical activity. Parents play a crucial role by encouraging fun, variety, and balance in their child’s sporting journey.

### **1. Emphasize Fun and Variety: Frame sport as play, not work.**

Children are more likely to stay active if they enjoy the experience rather than feel pressured to perform.<sup>32</sup>

**2. Highlight Long-Term Development:** Explain that developing a wide range of motor skills through multiple sports benefits them if they specialize later.<sup>9,14</sup> Share examples of elite athletes who sampled before specializing (e.g., Wayne Gretzky, Clara Hughes).

### **3. Reduce Performance Pressure:**

Avoid overemphasizing competition, rankings, or scholarships at a young age. Encourage effort, learning, and fun instead of outcome-based success.

### **4. Support Rest and Recovery:**

Let children have at least 1–2 days off per week from structured sport.<sup>13</sup> Promote unstructured play like biking, hiking, or simply playing outside for overall development.

### **What Does the Research Say?**

Sport specialization before the age of 13 can be detrimental to an athlete’s physical health, mental health, social development, and developmental progress. See page 30 for a detailed exploration of the risks of sport specialization. Further, the very real dangers of early sport specialization are incongruent with the odds of “going pro”; as highlighted in the 2024 Ontario Coaching Report, 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>33</sup>





### **ACTION 3: Stay informed about how to identify hazing behaviours and support your child.**

#### **1. Look for warning signs of having experienced hazing in your child's behaviour.**

- ◆ Behavioural changes – withdrawal, mood swings, reluctance to attend practices/ travel, sudden loss of interest in sport.
- ◆ Physical indicators – unexplained injuries, fatigue, or illness after team events.
- ◆ Social cues – secrecy around “team traditions,” avoidance of discussing activities, being excluded by teammates.
- ◆ Emotional distress – anxiety, lowered self-esteem, or expressing dread about team bonding.

**Practical tip:** Ask “What does your team do to welcome new members?” This opens discussion without judgment.

#### **2. Provide support and intervene when hazing is suspected.**

**3. Report and collaborate:** Contact the coach or designated safeguarding officer. Keep records of conversations and incidents.

#### **4. Support your child's well-being:**

Monitor for mental health impacts and, if needed, seek professional support.

#### **What Does the Research Say?**

Parents are often left out of hazing prevention conversations, even though they can be powerful allies in protecting their children, empowering them to intervene, and shaping healthy team culture. Research shows hazing thrives in secrecy and normalization<sup>27</sup>, so parents who are alert, proactive, and communicative can help disrupt it. Effective intervention requires adult involvement and institutional accountability, as athletes alone often lack power to stop hazing.<sup>34</sup>

# Recommendations – Sport Organizations

## What's Going Well?

- With nearly unilateral agreement between sport actors (coaches, athletes, and parents) on the values of a positive sport culture, sport organizations seem to be doing a good job at communicating the Canadian sport system values.

## Areas for improvement:

- Mandatory coach/parent training & safe sport policies, emphasizing a culture of fun for all ages and competition levels.

## **ACTION 1: Prioritize wide education on the risks of sport specialization and the benefits of sport sampling, especially for those hoping to achieve elite-level success.**

- 1. Publicize and Highlight the LTPD Model:** Explicitly encourages sampling before puberty and describing appropriate training loads, competition exposure, and milestones by age/stage.
- 2. Write Policy that Discouraging Early Sport Specialization:** Recommend delaying specialization until mid-adolescence.

### **3. Mandate Training for Coaches:**

On early specialization risks, monitoring workload, long-term development principles, and how to design age-appropriate practices.

### **4. Create Resources for Parents and Athletes:**

Clearly and accessibly explaining: **(a)** benefits of sampling, **(b)** injury/burnout risks with early specialization, and **(c)** how to monitor training load.

### **5. Work with other sports in your area to create schedules to allow kids to participate in more than one sport:**

Consider scaling back or eliminating out-of-season tournaments and camps to allow youth more opportunities to participate in multiple sports. Sport organizations don't need to compete for the same participants—research shows that children who engage in a variety of sports and activities at a young age are more likely to thrive and stay involved in sport over time.

### **What Does the Research Say?**

LTPD frameworks are recommended to promote motor skill diversity and delay specialization<sup>1</sup>; however, parents, athletes, and coaches must know and understanding of these frameworks. Research has found no evidence that early specialization is required for elite success and, instead, links early specialization to risk and injury.<sup>35</sup> Preventing the dangers of specialization requires coach knowledge and education<sup>36</sup> as well as educating families.<sup>37</sup>

## **ACTION 2: Mandate hazing policies, including how to intervene and how to discipline.**

- 1. Create Clear, Stand-Alone Anti-Hazing Policies:** Define hazing with specific, behaviourally based examples (physical, psychological, sexual, cyber, and substance-related).
- 2. Treat Hazing as Maltreatment:** Highlight hazing connection to bullying, abuse, and sexual violence. Integrate anti-hazing efforts with safe sport policies, complaint mechanisms, and maltreatment education.
- 3. Mandate Hazing Education for Athletes, Coaches, and Administrators:** Cover what hazing is, its harms, and how to intervene, include bystander intervention.

- 4. Establish Accessible and Safe Reporting Mechanisms:** Offer confidential, third-party reporting channels so athletes can report without fear of reprisal; Create anonymous reporting options (e.g., online forms, hotlines).

### **What Does the Research Say?**

Many Canadian sport organizations and athletic departments do prohibit hazing, but they are frequently buried in codes of conduct or harassment policies and are inconsistently implemented.<sup>38</sup> Canada lacks a uniform criminal or federal anti-hazing statute like many U.S. states; this gap places more emphasis on organizational policy, education, and enforcement rather than on legal deterrence.<sup>39</sup> Research links hazing to broader forms of maltreatment (including sexual violence, harassment, and gendered abuse) and recommends treating hazing within the larger “safe sport” / maltreatment prevention frameworks.<sup>40</sup>





### **ACTION 3: Dig deeper systematically into the shift in sport culture occurring around athlete ages 13+.**

When organizations emphasize developmental outcomes, coaches are less likely to adopt “win-at-all-costs” behaviours.<sup>19</sup> The following suggestions provide starting points for coach support:

#### **1. Strengthen Coach Education & Certification:**

Require ongoing training in positive coaching strategies, emotional regulation, and athlete-centered communication.

#### **2. Embed Positive Development Goals in Policy:**

Explicitly state that the organization prioritizes long-term development, well-being, and enjoyment, not just winning. Align policies with frameworks like the LTPD model.

#### **3. Provide Support Resources for Coaches:**

Offer workshops on stress management, conflict resolution, and communication skills, so frustration doesn’t spill into yelling or aggression.

By rewarding respectful leadership and giving coaches practical alternatives, organizations can shift culture and reduce the likelihood that negative coaching behaviours become normalized in sport.

#### **What Does the Research Say?**

As athletes get older, the focus of sport often shifts from participation and skill development to winning, rankings, and scholarships. Authoritarian coaching rises in competitive youth sport when performance outcomes become more heavily emphasized.<sup>25</sup> In some sport cultures, yelling, trash-talking, and aggressive behaviour are framed as necessary for building mental toughness or preparing athletes for higher levels, but these behaviours can be harmful to athletic development and retention. Coach stress and burnout and predictors of negative behaviour; organizational support reduces these risks.<sup>41</sup>

# Methodology

- The Coaches Association of Ontario (CAO), in partnership with Hydro One and Leger, created this study to provide coaches, parents, athletes, and organizations with information that will allow for a more inclusive, fun and safe sport environment.

## Survey Details & Methodology:

### Coach Survey - 2024

- 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:
  - ◆ 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?)

### Athlete & Parent Surveys - 2025

- 502 Ontario athletes, ages 6-24
- 501 Parents of Ontario athletes ages 6-24
- A comprehensive online survey using Leger's online panel.
- Completed between June 4th-20th, 2025
- No margin of error can be associated with a non-probability sample (see page 44).

- Criteria for survey respondents were:
  - ◆ Athletes: In the last two years, have you participated in a sport and/or recreational activity that involved at least one coach/ instructor? (Either on a team, in a league, with a club, or school. This does not include playing sports during gym class.)
  - ◆ Parents: In the last two years, has your child participated in a sport and/or recreational activity that involved at least one coach/ instructor? (Either on a team, in a league, with a club, or school. This does not include playing sports during gym class.)

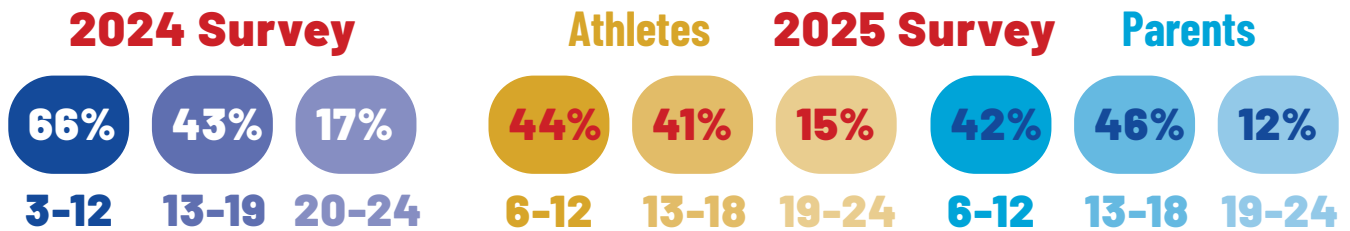
The surveys were designed and developed collaboratively between the CAO and Leger, the latter of which is the largest Canadian-owned market research and analytics company.

## 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”. Same goes for Athletes and Parents.
- 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.

What is non-probability sampling? This method selects participants using non-random criteria, so not everyone in the population has an equal chance of being chosen. In this report, age-range quotas were applied to the Athlete and Parent surveys to align with the 2024 sample, improving comparability across years. However, because the sample wasn't randomly selected, we cannot calculate a margin of error against the broader Ontario population.

## Athlete Age



\*The coach data shows all ages a coach is coaching (multiple teams acceptable). This is why the total percentage is greater than 100%

In our surveys the wording for the hazing practices was slightly different for a few of the practices as outlined below. (If not listed the wording was the same for all groups).

### Wording for 2025 Survey: Parents & Athletes 15+

### Alternate Wording

New members required to do things for senior members (carry bags, pick up water bottles, etc.)	▶	New members required to do labour for senior members (2024 Coach Survey)
Mean nicknames	▶	Demeaning nicknames (2025 Survey - Athletes under 15)
Pretend abduction/kidnapping of a team member	▶	Pretending to take a team member somewhere without them knowing in advance (2025 Survey - Athletes under 15)
Being made to drink or eat something gross	▶	Consumption of vile concoctions (2024 Coach Survey)
Not being allowed to sleep, eat, or drink water	▶	Deprivation of sleep, food, or water (2024 Coach Survey)
Damaging equipment or buildings on purpose	▶	Vandalism or property damage (2024 Coach Survey)
Pressure to consume alcohol or drugs	▶	*Not asked to athletes under the age of 13
Physical and/or sexual assault	▶	Getting physical or fighting

# Positive Sport Values

- This study looks at sport culture 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**.
- 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 were used 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'



# 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 foster a sport system that supports both competitive achievement and the well-being of all participants.

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

Coaches Association of Ontario, Ontario Coaching Report (November 2025).



# Endnotes

1. **Sport for Life.** “Long-Term Development Stages.” Sport for Life (n.d.). <https://sportforlife.ca/long-term-development/>
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# Sports of Survey Participants

**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 • Cheerleading • Climbing • Competitive Dance  
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 • Jiu Jitsu • Judo  
Para Judo • Karate • Kickboxing • Lacrosse • Lawn Bowls  
Luge • Muay Thai • Orienteering • Powerlifting • Ringette  
Rowing • Para Rowing • Pickleball • Rugby • Sailing  
Shooting • Ski Jumping • Snowboard • Soccer • Softball  
• Special Olympics • Squash • Swimming • Table Tennis  
Taekwondo • Para Taekwondo • Tennis • Ultimate Frisbee  
Volleyball • Water Polo • Water Ski and Wakeboard  
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